Allah—Our Creator

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Muhammad Zia Ullah

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BY
Muhammad Zia Ullah

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اِس درجہ ترقی خاک کو دی
وہ ہوش میں آکر شوق بنی
اِس شوق کا خود منظورِ نظر
سُبحان اللہ سُبحان اللہ

This humble dust
How high hath He raised
Made it conscious
then set it on a search
and Himself became
the Object of this search
Let Allah be praised
And praised be Allah

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The delights and excitements of the modern world leave little or no time for us to think of ultimate questions, like whence we came, wither we go, who has sent us into this world and to what end or purpose. But if now and then we spare our moments of solitude to think these questions we will realize that to do so is only to our own benefit.

It is obvious that we have not come into being of our own accord nor shall we depart from this life by our own choosing. Our coming and going are subject to the will of our Creator. Indifference to Him and to the purpose of our creation can therefore, only work to our disadvantage. On the other hand, if we acquire knowledge and awareness about Him and fashion our lives in accordance with His will and design this will surely be a way to safety and peace. And precisely to this way of safety and peace Islam invites all mankind—the pivotal focus of which is Allah, Our Creator. Our relationship with Him should be our major concern.

This book is an attempt to understand as well as to work out this relationship in daily life.

The Holy Quran presents our Creator as an all powerful being, loving, compassionate and benevelent. He has created us only to shower His blessings on us. He Himself seeks nothing from His creatures. Being transcendent He is far and above such needs and desires. What use and what need has He for creatures made by Him out of clay as a manifistation of His great creative powers ? Out of sheer grace has He endowed on us the priviledge of existence and set us on an unending course

of progress and evolution—Himself being our final goal. Thus we read in the Holy Quran :

(i) then to your Lord will be your return (6 : 165)

(ii) and to Allah is the return (3 : 29)

(iii) then to your Lord will you be brought back (32 : 12)

(iv) who when a misfortune overtakes them, say, Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return (2 : 157)

(v) know for certain that they will meat their Lord and to Him will they return (2 : 47)

(vi) thou, O man, art labouring toward thy Lord, a hard labouring; then thou art going to meet Him (84 : 7).

Stages of progress we have already covered. Was not there a time when we were in the form of elements of which we are compounded ? But each succeeding stage is higher than the previous one. Let us compare our present life endowed as it with intellegence and many other faculties with our condition in the mother's womb. Is not the difference breath—taking and maddening ? This onward march ordained and decreed by our merciful Creator will ever continue. Just as His grace and splendour are infinite so also is our spiritual journey in His quest. No wonder, therefore, life hereafter is eternal.

He created us and vouchafed to us the gift of reason so that with its help we can understand and recognise Him. He also decreed that communion with him is the goal of our life. Our Creator desires that we pursue the quickest path leading to Him. And what could be and what actually is this path? Himself being goodness personified, goodness in us will propel us to Him. Evil being opposite of good is abhorrent to our Creator. Evil in us, therefore, will drive us away from Him. The do's spelt out in the Quran are nothing but details of actions leading us towards Him, the don'ts details of actions leading us away from Him. Those who regard these commandments as arbitrary, prescribed by God for his own pleasure and imposed without

any rhyme or reason are mistaken in the extream. Just as the acquisition of knowledge only redounds to the good of the preson acquiring it, so does the life of virtue benefit the person treading the straight path. In addition to the gift of reason our merciful Creator has also endowed us with the power to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. We read in the Quran :

> And He revealed to it (the human soul) what is wrong for it and what is right for it ; he indeed prospers who purifies it and he is ruined who corrupts it. (91.99-11)

With the help of this faculty commonly known as conscience, we are able to choose between good and evil and stay on the right path. Furthermore there is planted deep within our nature a seed of the avowal of our Creator's existence. We read in the Quran :

> And when Thy Lord brings forth from Adam's children—out of their loins—their offspring and make them witnesses against their ownselves. By saying, 'Am I not your Lord ?', they say, 'Yes, we do bear witness.' (7 : 173)

This verse points to our innate nature which contains the sacred seed of Almighty's love and avowal to which every normal person will bear witness. But like all other seeds this seed also requires food and nourishment. And this is what this book attempts to do. If the author's effort in the eyes of the reader has achieved this purpose he may breath a prayer for him. If, on the other hand, the reader finds any defeciencies then he should act with forbearance. To err is human and no man can be free from this human failing.

Preface

I wrote this book in Urdu. After its publication, several readers suggested that it should be translated into English so that it may reach a wider circle of readers. It seemed worth while presenting the argument of the book for the attention of a world become completely indifferent to its Creator. If modern man were to consider ultimate Reality with the same objectivity and absence of bias as he has brought to bear on the study of Sciences and other branches of knowledge, there is no reason why he should not discover the truth.

The book seeks to set out briefly certain basic attributes of the Creator and some aspects of His relationship with man. An attempt has been made to keep the discourse simple and direct, but at the same time to present the arguments weighty enough to convince minds free from cynical misconceptions. Despite difference of race, colour or nationality, all men are but members of one family. Their hearts beat in unison. Therefore there is no reason why a cry from one heart should not reach the depths of other hearts and strike up an orchestra of mutually responsive chords.

Our Creator is the most Beneficent, most Loving and most Powerful. He has created us out of grace and compassion, not to serve any of His own needs: The Besought of all, He can have no need of His own to serve. In a grand scheme of evolution, He is leading us to progress along the road of increasing development and excellence. We have already covered certain stages along this road—did we not once consist of the various elements of which our present form is built? Countless stages still remain, each higher than the previous one. Does not our progress so far prove this to be true? Evolution and progress must continue, because there is no limit to the power and beneficence of our Creator. Are the limitless treasures of the universe we already know not sufficient proof of the boundless and all-encompassing power and grace of our Creator?

If we rid ourselves of prejudice and preconceived notions and ponder earnestly over simple every day facts and the arguments of this book, then despite the darkness of materialism that surrounds us there is hope that the reader's eye and mind will be illuminated by light from the eternal fountain-head of light that encompasses us.

Rendering this work into English was a difficult task, particularly as I had drawn heavily on Urdu and Persian Verse to illustrate my points and arguments. It is fortunate that my friend Qazi Muhammad Aslam has so very graciously not only produced a translation of the prose but also of the Verses quoted thus maintaining the unity of the presentation. I most Sincerely thank Qazi Muhammed Aslam for his kindness and labour.

PARK VIEW
3, GARDEN TOWN
LAHORE, PAKISTAN.
16TH JUNE, 1976.

MUHAMMAD ZIA ULLAH.

To my father:
whose contact and living relationship with his Creator was a moving example not only for me, his son, but also for all those who came closest to him.

رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

'Lord, have mercy on my father and my mother, even as they cared for me and ministered to my needs when I was young.' (17:25)

(I)

ہے قید آب و خاک سے باہر مقامِ دل
مانا خمیرِ مایہ میرا ماء و طین ہے

The heart's station
is far far away—
Not in this dungeon
of dust and damp.
Its origin though is humble—
water only and mortal clay.

The poisonous effects of modern civilisation have so overwhelmed all *parts* of the world—and all sections of human life—that religious faith and everything connected with religious faith has become anathema, an object of ridicule. The central point in religious faith is the Being and Person of God. But God is dismissed as an invention of the human mind. Man, it is said, invented Gods and Godessess during the days of *its* infancy and ignorance. The conception of God is an extension of the same infantile, ignorant attitude of mind. The truth is quite the other way about. Belief in God is one of the natural dispositions of man. It is not a question requiring any subtlety of logical argumentation. Says God in the Holy Quran

"وَفِي الْأَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ۝ وَفِيْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۭ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ۝"

And in the earth are Signs of those who have *certainty* of faith. And also in your own selves. Will you not then see? 51:22

There are evidences galore, only if man would occasionally withdraw into solitude and try and think with an unprejudiced mind. Did he come to birth of himself? Is he his own Creator?

Who will say 'Yes' to such questions? So much will be obvious to any one who consults his own conscience. No, his conscience will say. Then, if man is not his own creator, the Creator has to be some one else, outside of him. Could it be his parents? No, again. For, what is true of man is true *ipso facto* of his parents. Man, in short, is himself proof of the existence of God. Beautifully has Akbar Allahabadi expressed the idea in a couplet

مری ہستی ہے خود شاہد وجودِ ذات باری کی
دلیل ایسی ہے یہ جو عمر بھر ردّ ہو نہیں سکتی

My very existence
is witness
to the existence of God.
The proof is irrefutable—
you may try and refute it,
the whole of your life.

And Maulana Rumi similarly in his Mathnavi—in elegant verse:

جنبشِ ما ہر دمے خود اشہدست
کہ گواہِ ذوالجلالِ سرمدست
گردشِ سنگ آسیا در اضطراب
اشہد آمد بر وجودِ جُوئے آب

The movements I make
Are proof very strong,
that God Al-mighty,
and Everlasting,
there certainly is.
Same as the stone of the water-mill,
when it moves,
proves a stream of water,
there certainly is.

All our little movements throughout our life are witness grand of the existence of the God of Might and Power, the God Eternal. The millstone of the water-mill is proof of the running stream of water. So is my life—and every movement of my life—proof of the existence and power of God. The water-mill will not run without a running stream. Nor will life pulsate in me without the Eternal and Powerful Lord of Life.

The Holy Quran expresses this very idea in its own inimitable way. God created the human species, their bodies and souls and pointed to the grand fact of their creation and asked them ever to remain witnesses of it.

وَ اِذْ اَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْۢ بَنِیْۤ اٰدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ ذُرِّیَّتَهُمْ وَ اَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلٰۤى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوْا بَلٰى

And when thy Lord brings forth from Adam's children—out of their loins—their offspring and makes them witnesses against their own selves by *saying*: 'Am I not your Lord?' they say, 'Yea, we do bear witness.' 7:173

The passage is singular in its eloquence, in the proof to which it points. The proof is in man's own experience, an internal proof. Man's own nature speaks and proclaims. It cannot but affirm what is present in its seed. The seed will sprout and grow. Unless the environment is poisonous. Unless the poisonous influences of the environment will not let it. Unless the nourishment necessary for letting it open up and grow is denied to it. If the environment will not kill and nourishment is not denied the nature of man will ever proclaim and keep proclaiming irresistibly at all times and in all places "Yes, yes, we are witnesses to Thy creation".

دل ازل سے ہے کوئی آج کا شیدائی ہے
تھی جو اک چوٹ پرانی وہ اُبھر آئی ہے

This quest of the heart
is old and eternal:
You think it started today?
No, the blow came long ago,
it has only shown up again today.

And in the words of Rumi

ناف ما بر مہرِ خود بریدہ اند عشقِ خود در جانِ ما کاریدہ اند

My navel-cord was cut
with promise of Thy love
for me;
And in my nature didst Thou sow
the seed of my love
for Thee.

My birth is witness of my Creator. My origin divine is in my seed, in my nature. It is the poisonous winds of materialism which blow over this seed and destroy it. No wonder, so many of us find themselves helpless, unable to raise their heads from under the filth of doubt which covers them. That is precisely what has happened to modern man and the modern world. Had not the poet said

اور تو سب کچھ اُن کی بزم میں ہے اک خدا ہی نظر نہیں آتا

One thing in his circle,
Not mentioned, not discussed,
is God, poor God,
everything else is.

The truth is that matter and thoughts about matter dominate our minds. Our pure nature lies mauled, mutilated. Were it not so, our own existence would have served as proof of the Supreme Reality we call God. Nothing else could be more true, more real. Every thing but He would be as nothing. Because everything would then be but a manifestation a proof or sign of God. We know shade and we know sunshine. But could there be a shade without a tree and could we have sunshine without the sun?

سُنو! آتی ہے ہر طرف سے صدا
کہ باطل ہے ہر چیز حق کے سوا

Listen, and listen with care—
you'll hear it whispered
from every side, from everywhere:
'False and fleeting is everything but not God.'

But it is not our own nature that speaks from within. There are other proofs, other evidences, and logical arguments which speak of God's existence. It is surprising how people can ignore these proofs these evidences. Let us look at science. Let us try and see what science has to say about this vast universe and about its tiniest particles, all witnesses of their Creator.

ہر دم از کارخ عالم آواز لیست کہ یکش بانی و بنا ساز لیست
ایں جہاں را عمارت انداز لیست و از جہاں برتر است و ممتاز لیست

Every moment
proclaims
there is someone—
Who made this ordered world,
and fashioned it too—
And having made it to a measure,
raised Himself above,
to remain eternally distanced at
from His creation.

(II)

This whole world—of matter and life—is eloquent testimony of the fact that it has had a creator, a designer. Look at man. The birth of man—let us think only of his body for the time being—is a miracle most amazing. The sciences of human physiology and

anatomy—and other related sciences—are full of the details of this miracle. But let us—in our own humble way—point to a few salient facts: a tiny particle of an ovum joins another tiny particle of a sperm and the miracle of birth starts. The story begins in a mother's womb—that dark little world. What begins to grow in it is guarded in a million wonderous ways from the out-side. If the story of how all this happens could really be told, it will put in the shade the most wondrous tale in *One thousand* and *One nights*. That tiny particle—itself a combination of two, unaware of itself—begins to grow according to its own good time-table. It becomes ready for the emergence of life, mind, and soul. When time for it comes, the lifeless mass grown to size becomes a living organism. Says the Holy Quran

كُنتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ

You were without life, He gave you life, 2:29

This is the cryptic description by the Holy Quran of how life begins to pulsate in dead matter. Those who deny there is any life after death—let them ponder. They were a dead mass at one time. God breathed life into them. Cannot the same miracle be repeated once again? Why wonder? Why doubt? And remember this little mass that lies dead in the chamber of a mother's womb—which can be measured in inches—is waiting not only for life but also for the conferment upon it of powers and potentialities which it is going to use in the wide world which awaits its coming. The little mass has a rich role to perform, so it equips itself for this rich role as well as it must. It is yet a tiny speck, so tiny that it cannot be seen except with the help of a microscope. But hidden within it are all the organs of the human body, waiting to show. Every one of these organs is a miracle, a miracle more miraculous than any machine made by man.

Let us think of the brain of man. No man-made machine can match this wonder of wonders. There is nothing like it in the world. Nor is there likely to be. Its great feature is its capacity to think, to weigh and consider. And this capacity is not mechanical but mental. It is the capacity to observe and reason and know. With this capacity man who lived in caves at one time has moved out and conquered not this earth only but aspires to

conquer space, to travel to the moon and even make it his habitation. How wonderful! The cave-man has reached the moon. Early man knew the use only of stones. Modern man has split the atom and is now master of immeasurable power and energy locked up in the tiny particle. How has this come about? It has come about by the use of the power to observe, to think, to master. It is the power to subjugate matter by mind. And this is the unique thing about man. We are reminded of *Luqman** the sage. He lived on bread. Didn't he? On bread made of wheat? But this nourished Luqman's body and brain and the brain gave to the world all the wisdom we owe to Luqman. This wheat that Luqman ate became converted into wisdom!

How do the devotees of science and deniers of soul account for this? Human reason is not material. Yet it issues out of the human brain and feeds and flourishes on material food. Here is something material changing into something immaterial. Does not science—natural science—sanction such a change? If it does, why deny the soul?

In short the birth of man, his body, mind his achievements, are a spectacle wonderful in the extreme. Could all this happen by itself, with no one looking after?

چل رہی ہے جس سے جسمانی مشین
کوئی پوشیدہ کمانی اور ہے

This body-machine
that keeps ticking so well,
Cannot do this without
a lever somewhere.

(III)

Now have a look at the wide world—this cosmos that lies besides and outside of man. The earth we live on rotates round

* Prophet or sage celebrated for his wisdom.

its axis every 24 hours. And this rotation results in the alternation of day and night for us, that we may work during the day and rest during the night. Then the earth revolves round the sun once every one year. And this annual revolution gives us our four seasons each year, summer, winter, spring, autumn. Besides giving us our four seasons the annual revolution of the earth round the sun also gives us our crops, foods and fruits of different kinds—At the same time, let us remember, that this earth of ours, this globe with its well-peopled lands, its skyscrapers, its mountains, its mines rich with minerals, plains, oceans and all that they hold, is ever on the move at the terrific speed of 684,000 miles an hour. This movement we never become aware of. It is as though there was no movement. If science had not found this out, we would have continued to think the earth was standing still, as still as a stone. Just think, how much it takes to move a small weight from one place to another. Or how much it takes to move an object that is lying still and then to keep it in constant motion? From this you can form some idea of the vast amount of energy it must take to keep in constant motion not only the earth but also a countless number of other planets. God only knows for how long they have been coursing this limitless space. What power, what strength must the Divine Hand have that maintains these motions.

Now turn to the heavenly bodies that keep coursing in their appointed orbits in space, with a precision unmatched by the most precise time-keepers made by man. The best of such time-keepers lose or gain at least a few seconds every week. These errors have then to be corrected by chronometers installed in observatories to note the time of the revolutions of heavenly bodies. This is made possible by a Supreme order, by a system of laws, which rules the entire universe. But from where came these laws, this order? Of themselves, would you say? And how senseless would this be? Would reason endorse a thought as senseless as that? Let us recall a denier of God who became engaged in argument with a believer, how he lost the argument to his shame? The believer had given all sorts of arguments, but to no avail. One day at last, he purchased a globe from a store of school apparatus. The disbelieving friend came to see him in his study. Finding something new with the believer he asked, Who had made this globe and placed it where it was? The believer

replied in jest, it had made itself and moved into his study! The disbeliever said he was not such a fool as to think so.

The argument over God started again. A small globe, part of a normal school apparatus—cannot create itself, how can the very big globe, our earth? How can the countless other planets—infinitely bigger than our earth? And yet they are all held aloft in perfect co-ordination in the heavens, by laws which are so extra-ordinary, they never make a mistake.

فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

'He is God, the Creator, Originator of the Heavens and the earth,' (42:12)

Science presents us only a faint picture of the design, the wisdom, the architectural genius evident in the heavens and the earth. Yet read about it and you will find your brains racked and ruined. Our earth is but a small—a small contemptible part—of the whole universe. What there is besides it in space is so infinite, so awful, you cannot but endorse what is said in the verse:

اے خداوندِ خلق و عالمیاں خلق و عالم ز قدرتت حیراں
چہ مہیب است شان و شوکتِ تو چہ عجیب است کارِ صنعتِ تو

Lord of the worlds,
Lord of all creation!
Thy creatures, Thy worlds—
astonished are they
at Thy power.

Great Thy Glory
and great Thy Grandeur,
wonderful Thy handiwork.

We are in the dark at night. Or we tremble with cold. We make a light to see what is around us. Or a fire to warm ourselves. But the light reaches only a few yards around and the fire we make is but little and limited. Compare with this the light and heat of the sun. The difference is maddening. The sun—the heavenly sun, emits both light and heat. Not for any limited

space but for all the worlds. With unfailing, astounding, perfection. Billions and billions of years have passed and there is no slackening in either its heat or its light. The sun is a furnace on fire, kept alive by an unending series of atomic explosions. No fuel has to be imported by it from outside. It produces its own fuel, its own fire, to warm the worlds around and to keep them in light.

The vast immeasurable dimensions of space within which the heavenly bodies carry on their appointed tasks leave us spellbound. Their numbers are beyond count. It is easier to count the particles of sand on all the sea-shores of the world. Not the numbers of heavenly bodies. Are you afraid of congestion in space? But no, even congestion is taken care of. So vast is our space, the infinite numbers of our planets make no difference to it. There is room for ever more. Space still seems empty. Three wasps flying over the whole of Europe will not take as much room as all the heavenly bodies taken together. And the distance between them? They are so great, the human mind cannot comprehend them. They are not to be measured in miles. Scientists have invented the measure of light years for these distances. Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. A light ray girdles round our earth seven times in one second. In one year it will have travelled $365 \times 24 \times 60 \times 7$ miles. This gives us measure of one light year. And the scientists tell us that some heavenly bodies are at a distance of 10,000 million light years from us. This is stunning for human comprehension.

The light of the sun takes 8 minutes to reach us. But from the star BETELGEUX it takes 100 years. The diameter of this star is 273,000,000 miles, longer than three times the distance between our earth and the sun. And it is small—very small—compared with other stars. Some of these have diameters more than 1,000,000,000 miles. There are many stars such as Cephids, which are more than 60,000 times as luminous as our sun. These facts relate to our own solar system. And there are other suns and other solar systems and their stars which keep coursing in space. Then we know the milky way. Outside the milky way are unending starry islands and their systems. The milky way is as nothing compared with these. Every new telescope more powerful than the most powerful of its predecessors, reveals not only more stars but more systems of stars. More and

more powerful telescopes are being invented. So more and more worlds and systems of stars are being discovered. It seems what the astronomers have so far discovered is only a slender portion, a first view of the vast reality that lies before us. To think of these dimensions of creation is to bend our heads low in prostration, humble prostration to our Lord, our creator. And with the exclamation of 'Allah-o-Akbar' (ALLAH, yes ALLAH is the greatest of all) rising out of the depths of our hearts. The Holy Quran reciprocates this condition in its own way;

بِاٰيٰتِنَا الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهَا خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّسَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ۩

Only they believe in our Signs who, when they are reminded of them, fall down prostrate and celebrate the praises of their Lord, and they are not proud. (3:134)

And human reason is proud and blind. We can only mourn over what it misses through its doubtings, its debates. And again we have the scene laid out beautifully before us by the Holy Quran:

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ اَفِى اللّٰهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

Their Messengers said, 'Are you in doubt concerning Allah, Maker of the heavens and the earth?' (14:11)

The spiritual scotoma of man could not have a more eloquent description. And

ہر چیز میں خدا کی ضیا کا ظہور ہے
پر پھر بھی غافلوں سے وہ دلدار دُور ہے

Everything great, everything small
is resplendent with the Light of God,
But those who are lazy and forgetful
miss the Beloved still.

Newton was the man who had the first proper insight into the laws which regulate the motions of heavenly bodies. His insight over, he could not help proclaiming that this vast physical universe is only a pointer to the Might and Power and Glory of Him Who created it. And He is Eternal and Everywhere. And after creating it, He has not gone to rest. He continues to rule His creation. And so perfect, so complete is His control that our control over our own bodies, our senses, our muscles, is as nothing compared to His control over His Creation, over things He has created.

(IV)

These are great, fearfully large and visible bodies we have been talking about. Let us turn to the small microscopic bodies or better particles we cannot see. How do they come into existence? What marvels they reveal? Man stands between these two worlds of large, visible, heavenly bodies and the world of microscopic particles. Of the latter, look at the microbes. They are so small, you cannot see except with a microscope. But they have their life. They multiply and spread. They appear and disappear. The whole scene is a miracle. Our experts in medicine live by their faith in the existence of these tiny—literally tiny—living bodies. Health and ill health and the many problems connected with the stream of life depend for their solution on our understanding of the behaviour of these micro-organisms. The deeper, the more extensive our knowledge of these little bodies the greater shall be our knowledge of the secrets of life.

(V)

Next, look at the atom. Scientists have probed deep into the nature of atom in our time. And what they have found is wonderful in the extreme. Things solid in appearance are not as

they seem. They are worlds within worlds. Each little bit of matter is a world by itself. Look at a kettle containing some water and placed over a fire. Water is turning into steam. But what do we think about the kettle, of the bits of metal of which it is made? Are they the stationary solid bits they seem to be? We will say—of course they are. They are solid metal themselves, solid and stationary. Only the steam which comes out of the kettle is not. The steam is in motion. But, says science, this is not the correct answer. The parts of metal of which the kettle is made are themselves nothing but collections of electrons and protons. The electrons are in perpetual motion around their nuclei, the protons. At the terrific speed of 100,000,000,000,000 revolutions or more per second. Science has entered into the heart of the atom and found the old view no longer tenable that matter is only a collection of small solid particles. Now the language used by science is electrons and protons. The atom—the so-called last particle of matter—is a system of electrons and protons in perpetual motion. Each atom, therefore, is itself a kind of planetary system, similar to our solar system. In the solar system the planets revolve round their centre, the sun. So in the atom, the electrons keep revolving round the protons their nuclei. We cannot see the atom. But science has peeped into it by indirect methods. It has even determined the speed with which the electrons revolve round the protons. It is said that the space in which these movements take place is as tiny as could be—about one-millionth of a square inch. This is staggering. In our solar system we have the stars moving in incredibly *expansive* space round the sun. And in the atom in an incredibly *small* and limited space we have the electrons moving round the protons. Thus we have two similar systems in the world of matter, one in the expansive unlimited space around us, the other in the incredibly confined and limited world of the atoms. The similarity is complete. In the solar system the stars which move round the sun remain at a distance from the sun. So in the atom the electrons keep their distance from their nucleus. A well-built 6 feet heavy weight—about 240 pounds—could be pressed hard, so as to abolish all spaces between the electrons and protons of the particles of his body, and become tight-packed into one small body. The size of this body would become so reduced, you could not see it except with

the help of an electro-microscope. Science has found out a great deal about the ultimate particles of matter. Yet not enough. But from what it has found out it seems that in these infinitesimally small particles of matter, nature has stored immeasurable treasures of energy. The world only waits for this intelligent creature man to get hold of these secret treasures of energy and further change the face of the world.

As illustration take a piece of coal of the size of a pea-nut. According to modern science there is atomic energy in this piece of coal enough to propel an ocean-liner with several thousand passengers on board, a first-class hotel and other amenities, from England to America and back. Similarly if you could tap a pound of coal for the atomic energy it contains you could run all the industries of England for 15 days, all the fuel requirements will be found in this pound of coal

کیا عجب تُو نے ہر ایک ذرّہ میں رکھے ہیں خواص
کون پڑھ سکتا ہے سارا دفتر اِن اسرار کا

On the meanest particle
Thou hast endowed
properties wonderful all—
Who can read?
And who can narrate
the secrets of them all?

(VI)

In short we are left gaping in wonder whether we look at a particle of dust or at a big heavenly body coursing in space. Both bear the same miraculous stamp, pointing to one and same Creator

ہے عجب جلوہ تری قدرت کا پیارے ہر طرف
جس طرف دیکھیں وہی راہ ہے ترے دیدار کا

So strange, diverse,
in all directions scattered,
O dear Lord
is Thy power.
Should we but look—
Around, above, below—
every time we view some aspect of Thee.

But if you have said goodbye to your natural understanding and your conscience, if you have acquired spiritual scotoma you cannot see the truth of God's existence writ large in all nature. Truly has the poet Akbar depicted the situation.

ذہن میں جو گھر گیا لاانتہا کیوں کر ہُوا
جو سمجھ میں آ گیا پھر وہ خدا کیوں کر ہُوا

If the mind can contain it
and the intellect comprehend it—
How can it be God?
the God that is infinite?

God is Infinite, Pervasive and man finite and limited to a locality. Man cannot comprehend God as he can other things. To expect this is wrong. God is without limits, without dimensions. We would be fools to ask for Him to step down from His Throne of infinite attributes to become comprehensible for us. How can a limitless infinite being be contained in the mind of a limited being like man?

بریں عقل و دانش بباید گریست

Fie upon this logic of his!
and this wisdom!

(VII)

Such in short is our God, our Creator, our Lord.

فَذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ (یونس آیت ۳۲)

'Such is Allah, your True Lord' (10:33)

All religions have taught about Him. It is Him they have urged men to know and to love. It is Him Who has been the centre of their teaching, their message, True, they have taught in the main two kinds of duties, duties we owe to God and duties we owe to fellowmen. But these duties have one great end in view, and that is God.

Duties we owe to God are prescribed, so that we can get nearer and nearer to God. Duties we owe to fellowmen have the same end in view. For, when we serve fellowmen we please our God and get closer to Him. In a sense creatures of God are God's children. If we show love and affection to children—lift one to our lap and give a sweet to another, will it not please their parent? Will they not wish to show love and affection to you? So it is with God.

But for the moment we are not concerned so much with our duties to men. Therefore we will deal rather with the duties we owe to God. And dealing with this subject every religion including Islam has laid special stress on two points.

Firstly, that in our faith we should join no one else with God. Our loyalty to Him must remain undivided, unshared.

Secondly, We must love God more than anyone else.

It is a pity that with the passage of time Muslims also like the followers of other religions—have mixed other things with the truth about God. Worship of tombs, of dead or hereditary saints goes on side by side with indifference to this our primary duty to love God. Dividing our belief in One God with belief in other God's is prohibited because greater deviation from the true and straight path there could not be. This is disloyalty to God. *Shirk* in Islamic parlance. For one who has yet to find the object of true belief, the question of getting close to God does not arise. Shirk (joining other duties with the One God) is also self-degrading. Man has been created to subjugate, to use and to rule other things. Could he bow in obeisance to these things? It is unthinkable.

The duty to love God more than any one else is because God is the Only One Whom we really owe our love. There are

Muslims who think love of God is not love of one like ourselves. Therefore it is not natural. There are others who think that love of God makes a man indifferent to his other obligations including the obligation to develop and put to use his other capacities. Love of God is enjoined in Islam, it is true. But it only means submission to Him and carrying out His ordinances. Between these two extreme groups of Muslims are the great majority engrossed in the affairs of the world, in earning their living so exclusively that they have little or no time for anything, outside their mundane interests. As Maulana Rumi has said

عامہ را از عشق ہم خوابہ طبق
کے بود پروائے عشقِ صنعِ حق

Common folks
who eat and drink,
and are happy,
in their family circles—
how can they think?
of loving God?
for all He does for us?

(VIII)

It is very much in point, therefore, to inquire into the subject of love and try and see why no one is as deserving of our love and devotion as is God and why we cannot hope to achieve real and lasting satisfaction in love given to any other being.

The first question we like to put to the sceptics is, Are they not acquainted with love as an experience? Or, are they complete strangers to it? Is it not a fact that the human heart is capable of love of many different kinds? Love of parents, love of one's children, love of near relations, love of riches, love of popularity, of a good name, love of power, of ruling others, love of one's country, love of knowledge and so on? Is not history—in the broadest sense—a history of this one human emotion? If this is

true, is it not unfortunate and odd in the extreme, that the Being, the One Being to Whom we owe our birth and our growth, to love Whom is a guarantee of our welfare in life Here and life Hereafter, is considered by some to be inappropriate as an object of love by human beings.

لیک چشمِ دیدنت تو باز نیست
زیں دلِ تو محرمِ ایں راز نیست

Your inward eye
never opens—
No wonder, therefore,
this secret remains hidden,
from your heart.

On somewhat deeper reflection, the first thing we become clearly aware of is that love of God—our Creator—is embedded in human nature. It is part of the seed.

دل نمی گیرد تسلّی جز خدا ایں چنیں افتاد فطرت زِ ابتدا

Satisfaction the heart can never achieve:
Not without God,
and this has been the nature of man—
from eternity.

Loving God is a natural disposition, which we may not be allowed to sprout, to grow. Selfish desires may become overwhelming. The good seed may become mauled and dead. A delicate seed meant to lend elegance to human nature will miss its appointed destiny, just as an ordinary seed which is tended and watered the way it needs and deserves, will fail to grow into a well-stemmed tree, and fail to provide the shade and the fruit, for the benefit of God's creatures. The broad fact remains a fact that love of God, the Creator, is part of man's natural endowment. Man may miss the true path. He may turn to Gods other than the True God and lend his love to those to Whom it is not due. His natural disposition may become misdirected. The means and methods employed may be false or futile. Has not the Holy Quran warned us about it:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ
كَمَثَلِ الْعَنكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا ۖ وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنكَبُوتِ
لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝ (29:42)

Worshippers of false Gods choose a home for their natural disposition to love the One True God. But the home they choose is—as the spider's web—the most fragile of all homes. Would that they knew!

More the Holy Quran reminds us in the clearest possible terms:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ۝

And I have not created the Jinn and the men but they may worship Me (51:57)

The end of our lives—the Summum Bonum—is laid down as clearly as it could be. This then is the supreme purpose and to this the whole creation moves. To this it ought to move. It is unthinkable—unworthy of God—that He should plant a desire, a disposition, to move towards a great goal, but not provide the means for its achievement. All men, great and small, the elite, the ordinary, are fashioned to imitate the ways of God, to become His image, to absorb His attributes. It is impossible man should fail, that he should not have the equipment, the endowment, necessary for the achievement of this end. Is love of God and getting close to Him our destiny? Then it is impossible we should not have the means necessary for it. The first thing necessary is a strong appetite, an inclination impossible to with-draw from. To move towards God is the Great End of our being:

And the Holy Quran never fails to remind us of this:

إِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

'To Him we are destine to return' (2:156)

ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ

'Then to your Lord will be your return' (6:165)

وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

'And to Allah is the returning' (3:28)

ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ

'Then to your Lord will you be brought back' (32:12)

Love of God is only a corollary, a first logical step towards the Great Goal.

Nothing did I know,
of love or loyalty—
This precious gift,
out of Thy Grace,
gavest Thou to me.

The human heart will not achieve the satisfaction, the delight it seeks, without contemplation, without worship, worship of Our Creator. Worship is not a penalty we must pay. God is far and above such requirements. He has no need of our devotion, our praises, our obeisance. It is we who need this, to purify ourselves for the path that leads to Him: Says the Quran,

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

'Aye! it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts will find comfort.' (13:29)

ہر سرائے را چراغے ہست صائب در جہاں
سینہ و دل روشن از نورِ عبادت می شود

Every house in this world
needs a light—
to dispel the dark at night,
So our hearts and souls
need the light of worship—
to dispel the dark within:
Worship lights the path to God.

True, we human beings find ourselves involved in many another thing. Successes of kinds—riches of kinds—honours and distinctions—positions and so on. But our lasting, our ultimate satisfaction and happiness is not to be found in the things of this world, but in the joy and peace we achieve through love and worship, love of God, worship of our Creator. And why not? The human heart is the throne to seat God on. Only the Lord of all worlds, no one else, is entitled to this throne:

نہ ہو طغیانِ مشتاقی تو مَیں رہتا نہیں باقی
کہ میری زندگی کیا ہے یہی طغیانِ مشتاقی

If the quest be without excitement—
the excitement of love—
then I am no more:
For, what am I?
but this excitement of love?

(IX)

Now let us attempt a certain amount of analysis: Love has its motives, its springs. We can name four such springs at once:

1. Beauty;
2. Beneficence;
3. Perfection;
4. Love of one-self or realisation of oneself.

Let us consider these four springs of love, four motives, in turn, also where each would lead us by its own logic, through steps which naturally follow from it.

Is it God our Lord ultimately Whom we really should seek or something or someone else? If the answer is God, then the three groups mentioned before—two minority groups at the extremes and one majority group in the middle—must all be mistaken, people who have lost the straight path and moved away from it in other directions.

(X)

1. The first thing that moves man to love is beauty. Beauty attracts. It is part of the nature of man. It is impossible that there should be beauty and it should not move us. It is little different from our other senses, from taste, for instance. We distinguish between things sweet and things bitter. We feel attracted towards the former and turn away from the latter so we feel attracted to beautiful objects and turn away from objects that are ugly. Beauty may be anywhere, in human beings, in external nature. Wherever it is, in whatever object it may be, it shows itself in its effects on us. Green landscapes and springs of water—who will not be delighted by them? Beautiful faces—who will not be pleased to see them? But where does the beauty of beautiful things come from? Who has created it? Not self-created, for sure. It is created by God our Creator. And He Who has Created all this beauty, how very beautiful must be He Himself. The beauty we find in the world around is proof perfect of the unique unequalled beauty of our Creator. It does not make good logic that He should be able to create beauty but Himself remain devoid of it. He Who gives beauty to others—how can He be without it Himself? Who enriches others must be rich Himself. Who has nothing Himself what can he give to others?

کے فقیرِ بے نوا گوید کہ گیر

Did you hear of a penniless beggar
stopping passers-by to say,
'Come, take alms from me'?

Beautiful things around us attract. Impossible that God Who lends beauty to everything else, should not.

حُسنِ تو غنی کند زِ ہر حُسن مہرِ تو بخود کشد ز ہر یار
حُسنِ نمکینت ار نہ بودے از حُسن تو نہ بودے ہیچ آثار
شوخی ز تو یافت روئے خوباں رنگ از تو گرفت گُل بگلزار
سیمیں ذقناں کہ سیب دارند آمد زہماں بلند اشجار

ایں ہر دواناں دیار آئند
گیسوئے بتان و مشکِ تاتار

Thy Beauty makes us forget
other beauties;
Thy grace makes us forget—
all those nearest and dearest to us.
But for Thy animating Beauty,
There would have been
no beauty—
Anywhere in the world.

The enchantment of beautiful faces
comes all from Thee;
the colour of flowers in each garden—
also comes from Thee.

The apple-pink on white chins
comes
from the same
tall trees.

And from the same lands
come these two—
the tresses of beautiful maidens
and the musk of Tartar.

This eternal beauty—even a passing view of it could inspire verse like the following:

کس قدر ظاہر ہے نور اس مبدءالانوار کا
بن رہا ہے سارا عالم آئینہ ابصار کا

چاند کو کل دیکھ کر میں سخت بے کل ہو گیا
کیونکہ کچھ کچھ تھا نشاں اس میں جمالِ یار کا

اس بہارِ حُسن کا دِل میں ہمارے جوش ہے
مت کرد کچھ ذکر ہم سے تُرک یا تاتار کا

چشمۂ خورشید میں موجیں تری مشہود ہیں
ہر ستارے میں تماشہ ہے تری چمکار کا

خُوبرویوں میں ملاحت ہے ترے اس حُسن کی
ہر گل و گلشن میں ہے رنگ اس ترے گلزار کا

چشمِ مستِ ہر حسیں ہر دم دکھاتی ہے تجھے
ہاتھ ہے تری طرف ہر گیسوئے خمدار کا

Patent and pervasive
Is this Light of Lights!
The whole world has become—
one mirror
For those willing to see.

Yesternight the moon, I saw,
made me lose my peace—
For, something in it resembled
the Beauty of the One
loved by me.

Its beauty abundant
has filled my heart
with frenzied joy—therefore:
Tell me not of Tartar now,
or of Truk any more.

The waves in this ocean—the sun,
are witness unto Thee—
Each scintillating star is a scene
of refulgence
that's Thee.

The beauty of all the beauties
of this world,
is Beauty Thine—
the rose, the rose garden, receive their colour—
from the garden Thine.

The heavy-lidded eye of every beauty
reveals only Thee:
The curved lock on every cheek—
has its hand—
pointing to Thee.

Or see how sight of the 14th Moon can stimulate a whole night of contemplation:

کل چودھویں کی رات تھی شب بھر رہا چرچا ترا
کچھ نے کہا یہ چاند ہے کچھ نے کہا چہرہ ترا

'Twas the fourteenth night,
yesternight—
They kept talking of Thee:
Some said 'twas the moon they saw'
some said 'twas Thee'.

If we have a sensitive heart inside us, we must have experiences similar to this:

جس کے سینہ میں دلِ آگاہ ہے
اس کے لب پر اللہ ہی اللہ ہے

He who shields in his breast,
a heart made aware—
will have 'Allah, Allah' only,
Spring to his lips.

Spiritual insensitivity and lack of vision may make a difference. We may remain unmoved in the presence of beauty. We may fail to look for the Eternal, the Ultimate Beauty, behind the ephemeral, the superficial. Yes, same as animals would remain unmoved by such presentations. Beauty and love have been connected eternally, naturally. Where there is beauty, there will be love. It is a must. And there is nothing more beautiful than God.

اک عکسِ ناتمام پہ عالم کو وجد ہے
کیا پوچھنا ہے آپ کے حسن و جمال کا

It's a partial view we have,
yet a whole world is in ecstasy:
How would it be—
If we were granted
a sight of Him.
in His beauteous entirety!

Should God show us His Unveiled Face, what would happen to His creatures who happened to see? Unable to stand the sight they must fall senseless in a swoon. Why we do not see Him in this life of ours is because we are crude and He is fine. What is crude cannot observe what is fine. How can it?

وہ اپنے حسن کی مستی سے ہیں مجبورِ پیدائی
مری آنکھوں کی بینائی میں ہیں اسبابِ مستوری

His beauty intoxicating
compelling us to gaze—
Yet I, my crude vision hampered,
fail to see what He is.

In the Hereafter it will be different. There we will all, as it were, meet God. Provided of course, that we aspire sincerely for such meeting and that our striving is equal to our aspiration. It is this meeting of God and man for which man has been created. The attraction we feel for beauty, for values, has been implanted in us for this very purpose. The purpose must not go vain. We may achieve it in stages. But man must witness God eventually in full manifestation of His eternal Charm and Beauty. The purpose of creation must triumph.

آدمی دید است باقی پوست است
دید آں باشد کہ دیدِ دوست است

The real man
is within this shell—
Seeing God is like
seeing a friend.

The *aya* of the Holy Quran

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ مُّلٰقُوْهُ

'And know that you shall
certainly meet Him! (2:224)

Points to the same truth.

The Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and the blessings of God has himself said something similar.

فَيُرْفَعُ
الْحِجَابُ فَيَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلٰى وَجْهِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا اُعْطُوْا شَيْئًا اَحَبَّ اِلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّظْرِ
اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ.

The curtain will be raised and believers will see God in His Might and Glory. They will have their rewards but they will like no reward more than this meeting with their Lord (Mishkat).

We cannot see God in this world, in our present life. In this connection we should remember that knowledge comes by contrasts. If we had knowledge only of what day is like and had never known what night is like, we would not have had full knowledge of what day is like. We come to know what day is because of what we know of night, the opposite of day. God is unique in this respect. He has no opposite, no not-God. Everywhere we have God or signs of God, His light, His manifestation. This then is the point. God has no contrast. He is evident and everywhere. Because of this He cannot be seen. He lives in the depths, in the recesses of all Being. His beauty lies hidden,. veiled.

کیا کھلے جو کبھی نہ تھا پنہاں
کیا ملے جو کبھی جدا نہ ہُوا

You found Him you think,
Who never did hide?
and met Him,
Who ever was by thy side?

In the Holy Quran we read about Moses asking to see God. When God shows Himself, in vision Moses unable to stand a full view of God, becomes dazed, senseless. The narrative points to the fact that the Beauty of God is so dazzling, humans cannot stand it. A great prophet Moses sees God in a vision. He has only a symbolic view. Even at this he drops down stunned, senseless. Josephs beauty is proverbial in our scriptures. How he had charmed the women of the court of Egypt. The knives they were to use to cut the meat served before them, they struck on their own hands. So stupefied were they at the sight of Joseph's beauty! Didn't they cry aloud, 'he is no man, he is an angel'?

In short, beauty captivates. We cannot escape it. Thus earthly beauty gives us some idea of beauty divine.

فکرم بمنتہائے جمالت نمی رسد
کز ہر چہ در خیالِ من آید نکوتری

Howsoever I may try
I can comprehend not
Thy Beauty Divine—
farther thou art
than the farthest I could imagine.

(XI)

A doubt arises here which must be resolved. How can we be attracted to the beauty of God? God is without body and the physical eye cannot see Him. How do we get attracted and to what?

The answer is Beauty is not physical only. It is not the beauty of youth or physical proportions only. This only men of low

understanding will think and say. Such men will think beauty is beauty of body, of freshness of face, of rosy cheeks and so on. But this is not an adequate description. We speak of a beautiful city, a beautiful song, a beautiful picture, a beautiful character. Here we do not have beautiful bodies or well-proportioned parts, rosy cheeks. Yet we have beauty. What is beauty then? Beauty is excellences but excellence proper to the object the beauty of which is in question, proper to the person whose beauty is being judged. When such excellence is present to a degree of perfection we call the person beautiful.

Now let us ponder. The perfections worthy of God, perfections attributable to the Divine Being, are all to be found in Him. Only He possesses the most perfect attributes, only He is free from all defects, all weaknesses. He is One and the Only One. He has no equal, no partner. He is All-Powerful. He is Beneficent; That is, He confers and endows without any deserts. He gives without our asking or deserving. He is merciful. That is, He rewards our deeds fully. He is the Lord of all worlds. That is, He is the Nourisher, the Developer, the Guarantor of progress. He raises the imperfect to perfection. Ultimate reward and punishment are in His hands. Everything in this world, this universe, owes its excellences to Him. He is Unique, He is not begotten but He begets, creates everything. He is Self-subsistent, but everything subsists because of Him. If He withdraws His Sustaining Hand, everything will come to nought. Death or decay or decline is not for Him. Everything without Him is subject to death and destruction. He is above want or need. But all things have wants and needs. He provides food and nourishment for every one, every thing, but Himself is above the need of food or drink. He is the Supreme Ruler. His rule is over everything, Himself is free from all limitations, all constraints. He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. Nothing that is hidden from Him. Past, Present, and Future are the same for Him. No one can interfere in His Plans. His Wishes or Wills. But not a leaf can move without His Will. He is above the limitations of time and space. He is the Originator, the Source and Spring of the entire universe. He is All-Wise, All-Free in His actions and dealings, His Power knows no limits, His knowledge no gaps. His Mercy encompasses everything. His forgiveness has precedence over His wrath. His magnanimity knows no bounds, His Mercy no

limits. He forgives without cause, without atonement. His Mercy is All-Embracing, Ultimate, Basic. Yet He is Master, Mighty, and punishes when He should. He would not treat loyal and disloyal servants alike. If He did so, it would be a sign of weakness, He Manifests Himself with a new Glory every day, every moment. The Most Truly Magnanimous is He. Others give in the hope of reward Hereafter, or to be praised Here in this world. And they give out of what the Lord has given them. If the Lord had not given *them*, they would have had nothing to give to others. They give out of what the Lord has trusted them with. He provides for peace, protects us from all afflictions, guards us against mishaps. He is Dominant over all, the One Who compensates us for our losses. He turns to us with Mercy ever and ever. His greatness is Unique. He shields us from the consequences of our mistakes, our sins. He resolves our difficulties for us. Honour and disgrace are in His hands, He is the One Who raises us in public esteem and pulls us down if He so wills. He is the True Judge and Real Justice comes only from Him. His Eye is on every small detail. His is the True Appreciation. Glory and Greatness belong only to Him. He is the Watcher of us all, the Protector the Helper. He is the One Who listens to the prayers of men, the One Who accepts their prayers and their good deeds. He is Most Loving, Most Worthy. His attributes are ever with Him. He is the Most Manifest, the Most Hidden, the Very First, the Very Last. He is the Dispenser of Forgiveness and He is the Forgiver. Everything we have is His Gift. He is Most Tolerant, Most Patient. Even with those who are ungrateful or unmannerly. He is the one Who turns to men with Mercy, and again and again. He is the Possessor of all the good names. The Holy Prophet counted ninety-nine of them. But it would be wrong to think the ninety-nine names are the only names He has. These are names for us humble folks who live on this earth. They are for our comprehension. He is limitless, His attributes without count. His Beautiful names, nobody may count.

هرچہ آید بفہم وعقل وقیاس

ذاتِ او برتر است زاں وسواس

Understanding and reasoning,
and imagining besides,
may do their utmost—
but beyond, ever beyond,
remains the core—the essence—of His Being.

Now you are the judge. A Being, a Person, of such attributes—who would say is not entitled to our love and our worship? Shall we not give our full devotion, the devotion of our heart and soul to such a Being? Is there another one deserving of our love in a like manner?

(XII)

Another doubt may be disposed of here. That knowledge of all things does not come from seeing may be conceded. The beauty of music is appreciated by the ear, not the eye. But, it may be objected, even the ear is a source of sense-experience. How is the beauty of things appreciated which can be neither seen nor heard nor smelt nor touched? The answer is that beauty does not belong only to things known by sense-experience. There is such a thing as extra-sensory experience, the experience of moral qualities we perceive in others. We say, so-and-so possesses admirable moral qualities or moral character. Does knowledge of moral qualities or moral character come from our five senses? Hardly. It comes rather from an inner sense. It is not sensory experience but rather moral experience we point to when we praise moral qualities or moral character. Good moral qualities or good moral character are welcome to every one. Whoever possesses such qualities, such character is welcome. And naturally so.

Another interesting question arises here. It is said that love of God is embedded in the heart of man Like a seed is sown in some ground. Why was it sown as a seed and not made part and parcel of the nature of man like the other appetities and instincts of man? The answer is that where growth and development is the intention, there beginning is made with a seed. A seed has a

potentiality, a potentiality with great possibilities. Appetites like hunger and thirst are compelling. This is because hunger and thirst are not destined to grow and develop. They are destined to remain as they are. Other human appetites and instincts are in the same class. Love of God is in a class by itself. It is meant to grow and develop and reach height after height. Therefore, love of God had to be implanted as a seed. It could then become a source of great possibilities and great progress.

There is another reason why love of God was implanted as a seed. This is that natural dispositions must be left free if their exercise is to earn merit. Appetites and instincts are compelling, irresistible. Their exercise is not an act of merit. Merit comes of free activity. You can run a race in competition and win a prize. Appetites are not free. Their exercise deserves no reward.

(XIII)

(2) The second stimulus to love is Beneficence or receiving graces without deserts. If some one treats you with graces you have not earned, you feel drawn to him. They say,

"Man is enslaved by grace"

You see this natural response to grace even in wild animals. There is evidence in history on this point. Blood sucking wild animals would show instant gratitude on recognising their benefactors. Men should do better. If men are found devoid of gratitude in response to grace, are they men? No, they are animals even worse.

The graces—mercies and unearned benefits—we owe of God are countless, literally countless:

عنایت ہائے اورا چوں شمارم
کہ لطفِ اوست بیروں از شمارے

His Graces, Oh His Graces!
how will I count?
His kindnesses galore—
beyond count are they,
beyond count.

Yet let us try and name and describe some of the more patent ones. Even this seems impossible. At once we begin to think of the many, many different kinds of graces we owe to our Lord.

The first thing to notice is that our very existence, our life and being, is entirely a gift of the Gracious Lord. Had He not extended this privilege to us, we would not have found our way into this world of existence.

بادِ ما و بُودِ ما از دادِ تُست
ہستیٔ ما جملہ از ایجادِ تُست

what we were and what we are
we owe all to Thee.
our existence, our being,
is designed and created—
all by Thee.

Let man think of his origin. There was a time when he was nowhere. No sign of him anywhere. Then he appeared in the form of a microscopic particle or worm. And this worm became man.

کرمکے بودم مرا کردی بشر

A tiny insect was I,
Thou made me a man.

This growth from worm to man took place without any effort, any solicitation on our part:

ما نہ بودیم و تقاضہ ما نہ بود
لطفِ تو ناگفتۂ ما می شنود

Existed we not
nor asked we for aught—
Thou gavest all,
and Thou gavest of what
we knew nothing at all.

We came to exist and Thee, O God, provided for all we had need of at the time.

تری عطا ہے میری احتیاج سے پہلے
کبھی سوال کی نوبت نہ تو نے آنے دی

Thy gifts come
sooner than I am able to ask—
Thou waitest not
for my prayers, my supplications.

After this passage of ours from Nothing to Something, we began to see more and ever more graces raining on us. To enumerate these is impossible. We lived but completely unconscious, unconscious of everything including ourselves. In a mother's womb we had everything provided for us. With utter kindness, out of sheer beneficence. This gives us an idea of what was done for us.

Then after birth—feeble and helpless in every way—we found our parents surrounding us with God-given tenderness, ready to do every little thing necessary to let us grow. Amazing all this, a jelly-like mass of flesh becomes the object of the tenderest attention on the part of a father and mother. They sacrifice their own comforts and devote themselves to the comfort of the infant and find their joy in it, their real unpretended joy. Who can say he had done something to deserve the unselfish, the completely disinterested services, his parents rendered to him to bring him up? Then we come to live as one among the many, many, denizens of this world. But already God Our Creator has established a complicated but orderly complex of conditions under which we begin to live and grow. A most hospitable! Incredibly so! As if we were on the divine list of expected guests whose slightest needs had to be looked after! At birth we need the lightest possible nourishment. A mother's milk is ready to provide this. And yet another wonder. This mother's milk

becomes heavier with time. In consonance with a growing baby's digestive powers. The thin fluid that it was in the beginning becomes thicker and heavier. The baby needs it and can take it. The water part is now less, the food part more.

Just think of the Creator of this expansive, limitless universe, Master, Majestic, Magnificent. To think of Him is to tremble in awe of Him. This Creator, what interest can He have in a tiny helpless albeit living creature? Yet look at the magnanimity with which He deals with Him. Sooner than his arrival are assembled all the provisions, the conditions necessary for his life, health and growth. And not just assembled. There is awareness among these provisions that they must change with change in the needs of the baby.

For the maintenance of life what appropriate organs and powers have been endowed—eyes to see, ears to hear, a tongue to judge how things taste, a nose to judge smells—also, hands to work with, legs to move about with, a brain to do all the imagining, thinking, and concentrating. These powers are gifts great, given freely to us by Our Creator. And yet so lazy are we, hardly ever do we think what marvellous gifts are these. But now and then we do think. That is, when for some cause—may be illness or accident—we temporarily lose the use of any one of these powers, these organs. The power to ambulate, for instance. How many of us and how often do we think of it and thank God for it? But ask some one who knows, some unfortunate one who has lost the use of an eye or ear or limb.

اے خدا احسانِ تو اندر شمار می نتانم بزبانِ صد ہزار

countless Thy favours
O God!
a hundred thousand tongues
can deliver not the thanks
due to Thee:
my life, my eyes, my ears—
my hands, my feet,
my consciousness all—are
proof of Thy beneficence,
Thy concern, Thy care.

Think we have some one who lives in a distant land and who has sent an army of servants for our use. These servants are busy day and night serving us in all sorts of ways. They ask for no wages, and we have no means for making the least bit of return for these unpaid services. What should be our feelings for such a donor or benefactor? Remember that all our powers, our senses, our limbs are those unpaid servants of ours whom the Creator has appointed to serve us round the clock.

صد منّتِ تو ہست بریں مشتِ خاکِ من
جانم رہینِ لطفِ عمیمِ تو ہم تنم

Favours upon favours
hast Thou showered—
on this handful of dust:
life entire
is indebted to Thee,
Thy universal care.

Our Benevolent Creator–oh, how He takes charge of us and provides for all our needs after our birth! To think of this is to go into ecstasy. There is the sun at 90,000,000 miles from our earth, the light and heat of which make our life on this earth possible. The earth rotates round its axis and makes day and night alternate for us. The earth also revolves round this sun once every year and makes our four seasons. The sun, the seas, the winds that blow over them, the mountains, one and all contribute to maintaining our earth in life and lustre. Winds laden with water distilled from the bitter salt, with the water of the oceans blow over us and bring us rain, that is, water to drink and to feed our crops. They cross thousands and thousands of miles—over ocean and ocean—only to come and serve us. How much does it cost to fetch a bucket of water from the nearest well or tap? From this calculate the cash value of water that rains on us every year. The figures will be a staggering. The poet Saddi well said on the subject:

ابر و باد و مہ و خورشید و فلک در کارند تا تو نانے بکف آری و بغفلت نخوری

همه از بهر تو سرگشته و فرمان بردار شرطِ انصاف نباشد که تو فرمان نه بری

The clouds, the winds,
the moon, sun, and sky
busy with their appointed tasks—
and why?
that you may have your bread
and eat—
and ungrateful need not feel—
and all these are
to serve thee and for thee!
Would it be fair?
if thou obeyest not Him—
Who does all this for thee?

Now think of the mineral wealth locked in layers and layers of earth. Wealth we use in a thousand different ways. The industrial achievements of modern man would have been impossible but for this wealth under the surface. And the achievements of modern man are amazing. They include his conquest of the seas, of air, and now of space, and, of course, his journey to the moon.

After the mineral wealth which is buried under the surface of the earth think of the wealth which lies untapped in all the sea-beds. This is several times more than the other. The planet earth—we live on—is one-part land and three-parts sea. Sea-wealth, therefore, is at least three times as much as wealth on or under the land surface. But it is said to be much more. And the varieties of sea-wealth are far too many. Industrial civilization confronts the problems of scarcity and poverty. It seems to be tackling these problems with success. Which success seems amazing. But what is it that made this success possible?

Answer is obvious. The treasures that lay hidden in this earth of ours made this possible. Let modern man give a thought to this. His mastery—his growing mastery—over natural resources is admirable. He can be proud of his powers of harnessing and harvesting. But supposing the earth were empty of those treasures of food and other wealth which it seems able to belch forth year after year. Would modern man then have found anything to show? Progress owes itself to the treasures lying buried. True, it

needed great knowledge and skill to dig them up. But Who gave this knowledge and wisdom? and this skill to man?

Let man look at his daily food. What different things there are that he can eat? Of different kinds, different tastes. Things to eat, things to drink, so many, we hardly needed them all. Plenty and variety are both there. We owe it all to the wide liberal and universal beneficence of our Creator. On our table are spread so many things to eat, and so many kinds. Cereals of kinds, vegetables, roots, meats, fruits of many different colours and typical of their seasons. Then there are the milch animals. And what a miracle of taste and nourishment is milk! There are the honey-bees which collect honey for us from flowers. There are things, in short, in incredible abundance and variety, to please our palate and to fill our stomachs, which our Creator has provided for us. All out of His grace, His Beneficence. To contemplate all this is to bow in gratitude.

And let us not forget our clothing, the things we wear or use as drapery for our bodies. We may use cotton or wool or (as now) many another fibre. Out of these are made clothes for use in summer and in winter. They are light and soft and warm and serve us in climates hot and cold. And the silk-worm which spins out a shiny soft, yarn, that we may make manifold the already rich variety of fabrics we had for every-day use. We have synthetic fibres now. And these have ushered in a revolution in human apparel. Has not our Creator shown to us His magnanimity in the matter of clothing as He has in the matter of food? Chemical fertiliser have multiplied the food-wealth we could raise from our land. Chemical fibres are doing the same for our clothing. In short, our Creator has provided and He keeps providing for our increasing population and a wonderful provision it is.

آں کہ بدہد بے امیدے سُودہا

آں خدا است و خدا است و خدا

He Who gives generously
and gives for no return—
He is God, He is God, He is God.

(XIV)

If the question is raised about the poverty and paucity which stalk many parts of the world and condemning vast sections of the human population to go unclad, unfed, the answer is, Whose fault? There is no lack of magnanimity on the part of our Creator. The lack is of knowledge and its application. If a Pakistani peasant or a peasant from some other backward country is unable to raise as much yield out of 1 acre as can a peasant from Japan, then who is to blame? Students of Economics know too well how much the human factor—human knowledge and human effort and skill—has to do with making a country or a people rich or poor. Our Creator has endowed the earth with inexhaustible sources of economic wealth. How much wealth a given part of the earth yields will depend on the hard work, the skill and knowledge applied by man to it. The best part of a country's wealth is its man-power, both quantity and quality. The capacities and character of the population play a crucial part. It is these we must take care of, if we want to raise a country to progress. Our Creator is magnanimous beyond measure. It is the people, the men and women who inhabit a land, who have to put their God-given capacities to use. If they do this well, they can turn the fortunes of their country. Japan has set the example. Japan has very little of its own resources in material wealth, yet it stands in the front rank of advanced countries today. All this has happened in the last 100 years. The way standards of living have shot up in Japan is an eye-opener for all backward parts of the world.

Food and clothing are the basic needs of man. But shelter—a roof to live under—is no less basic. And what has our Creator not provided for it? Earth, wood, iron, stone, marble, glass are provided just for this purpose. That we may have strong, secure, and comfortable houses to live in. People in the more developed countries have put to use these God-given resources, and built beautiful houses for themselves. The residential quarters of their town seem like paradise upon earth. Those who travel to these countries and see what man has created for himself can easily see that this would have been impossible had not our Creator created the materials needed for house-building.

The abilities with which human beings happen to be endowed—different in different individuals—are a tremendous gift of God to man. Differences in these abilities which different individuals display are also a gift and a boon. To run the world and do its work, different kinds of abilities are required. If all men had the same abilities, each in the same degree, how could we have run the world and done the work which had to be done?

(XV)

What we have so far said of the Mercy, Magnanimity and Beneficence of God is evident enough. Everybody can see it in his own person and in the facts of the world spread around before him. Still, the fact remains that what meets the eye is insignificant compared with what one perceives when one begins to go deep and see below the surface or behind the curtain as it were. In this essay of modest dimensions we cannot go into any great details. Only hints of what modern science has to teach may be possible.

And these would be enough to show that anything we try to study in some depth only reveals the unlimited Grace and Bounty of God—Grace and Bounty meant only to promote our life, our purposes.

How does our Gracious God manage to maintain our life on this earth? Let us have a brief glance at this, this is what we find. Our earth is a round ball suspended in space, in constant motion—called rotation—round its own axis. This rotation gives us the alternation of day and night, so that we work during the day and rest during the night. Besides rotating thus our earth also revolves round the sun and completes each revolution every one year. These movements keep the earth steady in the same direction. At the same time, the axis round which the earth moves is not erect but inclined at an angle of approximately 23 degrees. This incline yields us our four seasons (every schoolboy knows about it). The earth's surface—spherical surface—is enveloped all round to a height of about 500 miles by gases of kinds. These are essential to our continued life on the surface of

the earth. A thick layer of this girdling envelope also protects us from those meteorites which keep raining on us from outer space. About 20,000,000 of them travelling at 30 miles per second, keep piercing into the gaseous envelope—besides performing its other functions, also keeps our temperatures within tolerable limits. (The limits are essential to our continued life). The present size of our earth is just the right size for it. It could have been neither larger nor smaller than it is. For instance, if it had been no larger than the moon, its force of gravity would have been reduced to 1/6 of its present force. This would have resulted in the evaporation of air and water. Were the size of the earth twice its present size, its force of gravity would have doubled, the envelope of air would have lost its present shape making our life on earth impossible. About the distance of the earth from the sun, had it been twice as long, the heat we receive from the sun would have been reduced to a quarter, which also would have made life impossible. On the other hand, if the distance of the earth had been reduced to one-half, the heat of the sun would have increased to four times its present heat; again life would have become impossible. In short, the present size of our earth, its present rates of rotation and revolution, the inclination of its axis of rotation at a certain angle, its present distance from the sun, its girdle of life-supporting gases—all these (and many another thing which we don't know) are arrangements designed by our Gracious Lord and Creator, to make our life on earth both possible and pleasant. Pleasant in a thousand and one different ways. The Holy Quran has something to say on this very point:

وَ إِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا

And He gave you all that you wanted of Him; and if you *try* to count the favours of Allah, you will not be able to number them. Verily, man is very unjust, very ungrateful. (14:35)

Think and think and enjoy the thought. The Graces of our Lord can not only not be counted, they are spread far and wide so as to encompass all things.

(XVI)

These Graces of our Lord are not limited to our physical and physiological needs. We have the thought expressed most beautifully in—

آنکہ بر تن کرد ایں لطفِ اتم
کے کند محروم جاں را از کرم

He Who has endowed the body
with favours great—
will He deny the soul,
graces equally great?

God, Our Lord, has given us the faculty of understanding of reason. It gives us natural insight into the nature of God, and into our ultimate destiny which is to meet God our Creator. The possibility of unlimited progress—and in all sorts of directions—has thus been laid open before us. Why unlimited? In what sense? Man has been created with a purpose, the supreme purpose of meeting God and enjoying His Beauty and Beneficence. This purpose is unlimited, unending. The striving and seeking for it, therefore, must continue for ever and ever. If the Beauty of God had been limited, man—because of his own limited nature—would have become satiated. Satiety is the end of striving, the end also of attraction. But the Beauty of Our Lord is limitless. Achieving satiety, therefore, is out of question. The philosophy of human immortality is also evident. It is, so that striving after God implanted in the nature of man may continue for ever and ever. Man's aspiration for immortality also serves the same end. To have implanted in us a desire for immortality, but not to have provided the means of its satisfaction would have been against the greatness and Graciousness of our Lord. Therefore after our birth God ordained that our souls—every one's soul—should become immortal. Death for the soul was made impossible, undivine.

جوہرِ انساں عدم سے آشنا ہوتا نہیں

آنکھ سے غائب تو ہوتا ہے فنا ہوتا نہیں

The soul of man
is not fated to disappear it:
goes out of sight—
but into nothingness does not fade.

Physical death is not to usher us into utter Nothingness. Physical death is to usher us into another, a much wider world. In this other world opportunities of viewing the Beauty of Our Creator, of getting close to Him are manifold, unlimited. In fact, such opportunities in our present cramped and confined world do not exist—

کمالِ زندگی دیدارِ ذات است
طریقش رُستن از بندِ جہات است

Life's destiny is vision,
vision of God:
the way to it is freedom—
from the dimensions of space—and
the dimensions of time.

Our present world—relatively to the world hereafter—is rather like the mother's womb, a confined, dark, dungeon. On the eve of our birth, had we been told that we were to be led now into another world—a world in which opportunities for progress, for development, are many and unlimited, we would have (even were we conscious) understood nothing. And yet it would have been but true and true most thoroughly. Death, therefore, is not destruction. It is not to perish utterly. To think so is not fair, not reasonable. Would God hurl us into perpetual unending Nothingness, after providing for everything we need during our short term of existence on this earth? Would He, after such meticulous care for us here, suddenly put out the flame of life to push us for ever into the dark? To shower favours upon us during this short span and then suddenly to forget us for ever is unthinkable. To tend us with benevolent care from stage to stage of development in this life and then to let us perish for ever is beyond comprehension, completely so:

ہے موت میں ضرور کوئی رازِ دل نشیں سب کچھ کے بعد کچھ بھی نہیں، یہ تو کچھ نہیں

Death must have
some meaning deep—
for, if dissolution be the end,
with nothing after it,
then all this is nothing, just nothing at all.

It would be contrary to everything we find in this world, contrary to God's Own Law, contrary to God's Own custom and wisdom such as we find at work in this world.

There is a law of progress at work, a grand purpose realising itself. From lower to higher, from better to still better. This law we owe to Our Creator, and this is the law which lends meaning to everything in the world.

جملہ اجزا در تحرّک در سکوں
ناطقاں اِنَّا اِلَیْہِ رَاجِعُوْن

All things moving
all things still,
proclaim—'we are destined,
only for Him'.

Let man look at himself. How did he originate? Did he not—once upon a time—stand reduced to the very elements which he is said to have been compounded out of today? It is the wise Law—the law of progressive evolution—which has made man into man. This is proof that Our God is not merely Our Creator, but is also Our Lord, Who takes care of us from humble beginnings and raises us to higher and higher and better and better forms. He is *Rabb* that is Creator, Sustainer, and Developer. From the beginning until today, man has taken on many forms, each succeeding form being better, more efficient, more meaningful than each preceding form. But for this law of progress, of death and survival, which operates universally in all nature, human progress would have been impossible. In many ordinary processes with which we are familiar we can see this law of progressive change at work. Our daily food consists of

vegetables, minerals and so on. As it enters the body it loses its original form and becomes assimilated into our body. It then begins to support our life. If we had not had any food, our body would not have survived. We would not have grown into conscious, self-conscious, understanding, and thinking organisms. Our understanding, our reasoning grows out of the food we take. There will be no exaggeration, if we said so. And we don't stop at understanding and reasoning. We go forward and achieve other things and go on and on in ways astonishing in the extreme. History, especially history of science, is witness to this.

So, if everything is subject to the Wisdom of Evolutionary Progress, how can the birth and death and destiny of man stay out of this? Evolutionary progress admitted, we can understand death at once as a link in a grand chain. Man is made for progress. Learning and improving continue. Each new stage is better and higher than the previous one. Taken altogether, this eternal progress is enough to prove that we have a Creator and that Our Creator is concerned with our sustenance and progressive development.

ہے ایوولیوشن بس اِک تفسیر ربّ العالمین
کاش اس نقطے سے واقف ہوں مسلماں اِن دنوں

Evolution is unfolding,
unfolding without limit:
and unfolder is the Lord:
would that Muslims would learn,
that this is the meaning,
Of 'Lord of all the worlds,'

God is the Great Evolver.

(XVII)

True, we find it difficult to form an idea of how life hereafter would be like. The full meaning of it we cannot know in our life here. But we have hints of it in the world of dreams. When we

examine our dream experiences, there are a few things we begin to understand. While we sleep and dream our ordinary physical senses are also asleep suspended and put out of action for the time being. But our soul—and soul is of the essence of man—is at work. Without the use of any of our physical senses and physical powers! In dreams we have visual experiences, and yet the eyes are not at work. We hear and our ears at the time are not functioning. Similarly we have taste experiences without exercising our sense of taste. We walk about and yet we are lying in bed doing nothing of the sort. In short, dream life furnishes examples of experiences we have when we are awake. And yet in dreams we do not use our physical senses. In dreams we transcend the limitations of space and time. What we cannot do while we are awake becomes easy enough while we dream. We find ourselves flying in the air. Long distances and all ordinary measures lose their usual meaning. Now in one place, at once we find ourselve at another. The distance between the two places may be several thousand miles. We meet persons long dead. At the same time our dream experiences at the time we have them seem real to us. So much so we have frightening dreams and nightmares. We then wake up in a wild state of fear. On discovering that the experience was only a dream experience, we become composed again. The fear and shock of the experience are gone. We are at rest and peace again. We also have beautiful dreams the pleasant effect of which lasts even after we are awake. We also remember our dream experiences. And yet our eyes or ears or other physical sources of experience have played no part in these experiences. How could they, while they were out of action.

Here, therefore, is a question: If our eyes have not been at work, how could we see? The seeing is a fact because we remember it after we had experienced it. The answer to this question is that the visual experience we had in a dream, we owe to our soul. True, our soul is connected with our body; that is, in the divine scheme of creation. But the soul has an existence of its own. The soul can and does rise above the limitations of physical space and time. It has access to a world of its own. This world continues to exist after our physical death here. The world of dreams gives us insight into the possibilities of spiritual life. Addicts to rationalism, deniers of soul, will still think our claim unavailing. So questions about how the soul may be related to

the body do not arise. Yet they concede there is such a thing as understanding or reason. Are understanding and reason material entities? And yet these immaterial things are connected with a material something, that is, the brain.

In point of fact the so-called rationalist denial of the existence of the soul hides within it a sort of affirmation of the soul. It is as though a person present in his house should try and put off a visitor by himself announcing from inside the house, 'Sorry I am not in the house'. Contradictions of this kind give away many a false argument.

Western psychologists also—by and large—deny the existence of the soul. But they believe instead in the Unconscious in one form or another. Psycho-analysis is the systematic study of the Unconscious in each man. And psychoanalists invest the Unconscious with amazing properties. On reading about which one begins to wonder whether the Unconscious is not another name for the soul. Freud or someone else is said to have demonstrated that a patient under hypnosis begins to recall memories long forgotten or never remembered or very hard to remember—in waking life. Recall under hypnosis is said to be detailed and exact. Memories remain locked away in the Unconscious. The patient's entire history can be read from his Unconscious. It also seems that the Unconscious is above the limitations of time and distance. If Freud or other psychologists think that a man's Unconscious, or part of a man's mind exists which is able to transcend time and space, what is the difference between this Unconscious part of a man's mind and his soul? From dreams we have deduced just this. Our soul is able to function in its own right, with a status of its own, unbound—like the body—by time and space. It is able to rise above the body and to operate without the assistance of physical senses and physical organs. Death does not destroy it. Death only separates it from the body.

(XVIII)

In short, questions usually raised between religious believers and others, 'What happens after death? What may be meant by Resurrection, the Judgment Day, Heaven, Hell and so on', are

questions about which certain knowledge cannot be had. Not like the knowledge we can have of things of this world, things we study in natural and social sciences. The reason is obvious. Human knowledge cannot rise above the level of development that human personality can attain in this life. While we belong to this world, we cannot understand the nature of the next. Descriptions of the Hereafter, therefore, fall back upon symbols and metaphors and experiences derived from life Here. The joys of paradise, for instance, will have to be described in terms of joys we know Here. The Holy Quran and Hadith use just this method for the elucidation of life Hereafter. There is no other way open. Unfortunately not only common people, but even scholars—who ought to know better—have taken the scriptural descriptions in their literal sense. Yet if they had but read their scripture with some little care, they would have found that this is not the correct approach to an understanding of the scriptural descriptions. The scriptural descriptions are metaphorical, this being the only way to bring home their meaning to us. Says God in the Holy Quran.

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ۔

That is, the description of paradise is a metaphorical not a literalist description. (47 : 16)

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ۔

And no souls know what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their good works. (32 : 18)

The joys of paradise are not reproductions of the joys of this world but only their images. Were it not so, the joys of paradise would not have been described as joys kept hidden from the believers. 'Milk', 'pomegranates', 'grapes', 'honey', we know and use. They are not secrets hidden from us. Used for paradise, they must be understood as images or metaphors. Again the Holy Prophet himself has said about paradise:

لَا عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ وَلَا أُذُنٌ سَمِعَتْ وَلَا خَطَرَ عَلَى قَلْبِ بَشَرٍ۔

No eye hath seen it, no ear hath heard it,
no man hath any conception of it.

The Word of God and the words of the Holy Prophet both hold the joys of paradise as new and unique, unknown-except for their resemblance in spirit with the joys of this world. We cannot think the former as literal continuations of the latter. If we do, we should be moving away from the spirit of the scriptural teaching. 'Day of judgment', 'Resurrection', 'The Great Balance', 'Paradise', 'Hell' are all valid and true, But they are not to be taken literally. They are appropriate metaphors and similes for what we have yet to know. It is their essence or hidden meaning we must take, not their superficial sense. That would be wrong, utterly wrong. It would be naive and childish in the extreme to think of God as a Monarch of the fables, sitting on a huge throne, the dead rising out of their graves, accounts of their past deeds in their hands, appearing before Him, being ordered to paradise or to hell as the case may be, and all this happening in a vast, fearful, plain. Is it thus we should think of the Deity? In outright, primitive physical terms? God save us from such thought! No, no, God is holy, free from physical blemishes. Descriptions of the Hereafter to be found in the Holy Quran are all valid. But they must be understood in terms consistent with the central image of the God of the Quran—Holy, Pure spirit, Transcendent, Possesser of the Most Perfect attributes. There must be no contradiction between the essence of these descriptions and the naive images and pictures which they rouse in our minds.

What happens at death? Only the soul leaves the bodily frame which has served it until now, as a shell, a holder or a base. When body and soul part with each other, death is only for the body, not for the soul. And Why? Because we are destined by our Creator to go from Here to an Hereafter, a new world of possibilities and unheard of progress. In this new world our crude present physical frame is unable to function. But the soul will yet have a Body; body of a new sort. The spirit of everything needs a shell, a container, the function of which is only to hold it. This new frame will grow out of our deeds in this world. Good deeds will lend us a spiritual body, capable of viewing God, Who is Himself Spirit. Those who take good deeds with them from here will view God Hereafter and will be in the

Garden with Him. But black deeds will lend us a black body. Dark itself, it will be unable to view God Who is Pure Light. Darkness cannot be reconciled with light. They are poles apart. No wonder, therefore, sinners will be deprived of a vision of God, until of course, they are reclaimed.

Thus of the inmates of paradise we have the Holy Quran tell us this:

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَىٰ نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ
بِأَيْمَانِهِمْ

> And *think* of the day when thou wilt see the believing men and the believing women, their light running before them and on their right hands, *and it will be said to them*, 'Glad tidings for you this day'. Gardens through which streams flow, wherein you will abide. That is the supreme triumph. (57:13)

And again.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ
لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

> Their light will run before them and on their right hands. They will say, 'Our Lord perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely Thou hast power over all things. (66:9)

The inmates of Paradise keep praying to God, for more and yet more light. What does it show? That spiritual progress Hereafter will be unending. There will be after each achievement a still higher achievement. Finding one still imperfect they will implore for another still more perfect. After this, one still more perfect. And so on. Knowledge of God will be unending. There will always be something new and more to aspire for and to achieve.

ہر لحظہ نیا طُور نئی برقِ تجلّی
اللہ کرے مرحلۂ شوق نہ ہو طے

Every moment comes to view,
a new sinai, a new lightning!
I wish to God—
it would go on like this—
this eternal longing, this quest.

This is what we call Infinite Beauty. It is the Beauty of God. Its vision is ever beckoning, ever exciting.

Of the Inmates of Hell God said:

مَنْ كَانَ فِي هٰذِهٖٓ اَعْمٰى فَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اَعْمٰى وَاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا

But who is blind in this world
will be blind in the Hereafter, and
even more astray from the way. (17:73)

The verse is an eye-opener. Will you take it literally? Then it will make no sense. A man blinded for some reason in the world Here will rise blind in the Hereafter? Physically, that is to say? No.

What the verse means is that a good life lived Here sharpens the believers vision for knowledge of God Hereafter. So a bad life dulls the sinner's vision for such knowledge Hereafter. The sinner remains spiritually blind, deprived and distanced. Reward and punishment that we meet with Hereafter, do not come from out-side. They grow naturally from our own deeds and are the natural consequences of those deeds. What we do Here is presented to us Hereafter as the consequence—only more concrete—of what we do Here. Punishment hereafter is not arbitrary, the pleasure of the divine despot, but the consequence in the concrete of our own bad deeds. The sinner will recognise it as his own doing. Similarly rewards Hereafter—the joys of paradise—are a consequence of the doer's good deeds.

About Hell, let us remember the Divine Promise,

رَحْمَتِيْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

'My Mercy encompasseth all things'.

According to this, even Hell is proof of Divine Mercy. Does not the sick man who knows what he should do make for an hospital, where arrangements exist, for restoring him to health? He suffers all the pains involved and even spends and gives for their sake and for the sake of the health that results from them. He submits even to surgery. Why? Only, that he may have health again. This is exactly what our Gracious Lord and Creator will do for those who go spiritually sick from Here, so that the impedients to the spiritual destiny—the end of our being—which they themselves have created may disappear. It was the destiny they had missed by their own deeds. It is what they will now reach. Hell is not a place for punitive exercises. It is a place for re-education, reform. It is wrong to think of divine rewards and punishments as arbitrary findings delivered to suit the whims of the divine despot. Many anti-religionists think so. The Holy Quran describes Hell as the Sinners 'Mother'.

أُمُّهُ هَاوِيَه (قارعة)

'Their mother is Hell.' (101:10)

A child is carried by a mother in her womb only for such time as is necessary. Necessary for the requirements of life after birth. The mother is all affection, all concern for the child. The metaphor is full of meaning, where there is love, there is also punishment, but punishment not for the pleasure of it but for the good of the child. Hell is a reformatory; its purpose is reform, re-education, recovery. Hell therefore is not—it cannot be—a permanent institution. True, there are expressions in the Holy Book which may be so construed (misconstrued to be exact). *Khalidina fi ha abada* (will live there for ever) only means a good length of time. We have decisive passages in the Holy Quran on this subject. Inmates of paradise and inmates of hell are described, as it were, in parallel columns:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُوا فَفِي :

النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ ۝ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ

وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ رَبُّكَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيْدُ ۝ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ سُعِدُوْا فَفِي الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَآءً غَيْرَ مَجْذُوْذٍ ۝

As for those who will prove unfortunate, they shall be in the Fire, where in there shall be for them sighing and sobbing.

Abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, excepting what thy Lord may will. Surely, thy Lord does bring about what He pleases.

But as for those who will prove fortunate, they shall be in Heaven, abiding therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, excepting what thy Lord may will—a gift that shall not be cut off. (11 : 107–9)

If Hell were a permanent institution, as indeed is paradise, why not the same expression to project the permanence of both? The rewards of paradise are clearly described as rewards 'which will cease not'. Unambiguously and eloquently permanent. But this is not said of the punishments of Hell. Why not? The Quran passage is loud about one permanence, silent about the other. And yet it is one and the same passage which describes both paradise and hell. What does it mean? Only this, that hell is a Temporary institution, to serve for a term.

The Holy Prophet's own declaration is decisive:

يَأْتِيْ عَلٰى جَهَنَّمَ زَمَانٌ لَيْسَ فِيْهَا اَحَدٌ

a time will come on hell when it will be empty of all inmates (Maalamal-Tauzil)

(XIX)

It may be said that we have presented only one side of the medal. What about the pain and anguish, the fatalities, the

destruction that are the misfortune of man? Our reply is that what comes from the Creator carries wisdom in it. The wisdom is hidden. It may not show at once. We have seers like Akbar Allahabadi who have spotted this.

غم میں بھی قانونِ فطرت سے میں کچھ بدظن نہیں
یہ سمجھتا ہوں کہ میرا دوست ہے دشمن نہیں

Not even in grief
do I cease to trust
this law of Nature:
For, I continue to think
it may yet be a friend,
not a foe.

For instance of all the ills that can befall man on earth the most terrifying is his own death, his destruction. But death—as we have said already—is an essential condition, a necessary means of man's own progress. Besides the march of progress requires that generations of individuals should die and new generations take their place. Only thus can continuous progress be assured. Also if death could be eliminated the unchecked increase in the world's population will pretty soon have not enough room for every one to live. Earth will itself become hell for those who object to death as a rule of existence. They will themselves begin to ask for it. Who does not know what social scientists and economists keep saying. They are all for a moderate birth rate balanced by a natural death rate.

We must not also forget that the wisdom of the divine order may not be apparent at once. But when it does reveal itself it fills man with a sense of wonder—a sense of true and miraculous design. Our own failure to spot divine wisdom in God's designs is no proof that wisdom does not exist. The primitive man for example altogether failed to discover any wisdom in uranite (mineral of uranium). But with advance in knowledge we have discovered a new source of boundless energy hidden in this apparently dead mass of matter.

Further we must remember that misfortunes and miseries come to rouse unsuspected powers in man. What is called

achievement and progress is nothing but dealing successfully with difficult situations:

تندیٔ بادِ مخالف سے نہ گھبرا اے عقاب
یہ تو چلتی ہے تجھے اونچا اُڑانے کے لیے

Fear not, O eagle!
the fierce wind that blows
from in front of thee:
it is to help thee fly,
higher than high.

Second thing to remember is that if there were no pain or anguish in the world, there would be no happiness, no peace either.

رنج و غم را حق بپٹے آں آفرید
تا بدیں ضد خوش دلی آید پدید

Pain and anguish
did God create—
that we may know—
by contrast—
what is pleasure?
what is peace?

Third thing to remember is that trials are trials. They bring no joy to God. Nor any knowledge God does not already have of the internal states of men. They reveal—to men—their capabilities, their potentialities. They provide a diagnosis, a measure of men's pace in their march to progress:

آں خدا را میرسد کو امتحاں پیش آرد ہر دمے با بندگاں
تا بما مارا نماید آشکار کہ چہ داریم از عقیدہ در سرار

It is God's Right—
He should put us to test
every now and then:
that we come to know
what we are at heart, and
what beliefs we hold.

If there were no trials, there will be no knowing how and where we stand.

Also, how shall we acquire the power to endure, except if we confront difficulties and dangers? How does gold become free of dross unless it is allowed to melt in a crucible?

Evil—and evil is of many kinds—is also picked at for being contrary to Divine Mercy. But pause a little. Take anything 'evil' by itself. In itself you will find nothing evil in it. Fire burns and kills and destroys, true. But fire does other things, all merciful. Fire promotes civilization, runs industries. There would have been none of these, if we did not have fire. Fire is not evil. It is good. It is the evil *use* of it that makes it evil. Evil use of a thing meant for good use in disobedience of the Creator. War, violence, murder, arson and marauding are evil but they are acts of disobedience of the Creator. They are acts forbidden. Would you ask why there is no fire which is incapable of being put to bad *use*? Answer to this is, It is illogical, it is asking for the impossible. Could fire burn and cool at the same time? Could it perform the functions both of fire and water? Could a thing serve as poison and antidote at the same time?

If it could, it would be to put two contradictories together. Which is impossible.

In short, there is no such thing as evil as such. Every so-called evil has some good in it. It is the use we make of things which makes them evil.

There is wisdom of the highest order in the world our Creator has created. We had capacities and capabilities given to us. To rouse these, to let them grow and develop to their maximum. He provided some stimuli, some challenges. As such our world could not have been a world which knows only pleasures, and no pains. What are called moral qualities could be had only in a world in which good and evil were both open possibilities. To do a good turn to someone is good, to do a bad turn is evil. In our fantastic paradise both would be out of question. No one will be

in need and no one will do anything but good. In such a world, good and evil are not open possibilities, therefore, completely out of question.

بہشت آں جا کہ آزارے نباشد
کسے را با کسے کارے نباشد

The Garden hereafter
knows no pains, no problems,
no dependence of one
upon another.

Moral values can exist only in a world like ours, where opportunities for both good and evil exist, where challenging occasions keep arising and meeting those challenges is possible, where good and evil exist side by side. Reflection is needed, reflection. If you will not reflect, nothing will help. Our world is rooted in wisdom. It is a school, a gymnasium, where natural powers and potentialities—mental and physical—are nurtured. It is, therefore, a world which serves us for a time and then disappears. A child who enters school, does not go to stay there for ever. The world—that is our life in this world—is short-lived; it slips out of our hands so easily. Let us have no regrets over it. Let it slip. In this there is wisdom. We owe gratitude to our Creator for making it so. True, we have grief and now and then we suffer bereavement. Grief and sorrow help to build man's moral character. Listen to the poet:

دیدۂ بینا میں داغِ غم چراغِ سینہ ہے
روح کو سامانِ زینت آہ کا آئینہ ہے
حادثاتِ غم سے ہے انساں کی فطرت کو کمال
غازہ ہے آئینۂ دل کے لیے گردِ ملال
طائرِ دل کے لیے غم شہپرِ پرواز ہے

راز ہے انساں کا دل غم انکشافِ راز ہے
غم نہیں غم روح کا اِک نغمۂ خاموش ہے
جو سرودِ بربطِ ہستی سے ہم آغوش ہے
شام جس کی آشنائے نالۂ "یارب" نہیں
جلوہ پیرا جس کی شب میں اشک کے کوکب نہیں
جس کا جامِ دل شکستِ غم سے ہے نا آشنا
جو سدا مستِ شرابِ عیش و عشرت ہی رہا
ہاتھ جس گلچیں کا ہے محفوظ نوکِ خار سے
عشق جس کا بے خبر ہے ہجر کے آزار سے
کلفتِ غم گرچہ اس کے روز و شب سے دُور ہے
زندگی کا راز اس کی آنکھ سے مستُور ہے

Grief's darkness
for a discerning eye
is like a lamp—
for the anguished heart.
sobs and sighs—
only animate the soul.

This God-given nature
achieves its perfection
through experiences of grief:
the dust of pain
is polish for the mirror
of man's heart.

If the heart be a bird
then grief is its great wing:
if it be a secret locked,
then grief is the key—
to its unlocking.

Grief is not grief
it's the song, the soul sings
to resonate in silence,
with nature's own strings.

Who at sundown
has raised not his hands
to say 'O my Lord'!
who has never let tears drop—
to accompany him in the stillness
of the night.
whose brinful heart

Has suffered not—
the slightest touch of grief or pain—
who has enjoyed,
uninterruptedly
the pleasures of this life.

Flowers who has plucked
without a single thorny prick,
who has loved but never known—
the pain of separation from his love.

Be there such a man,
who truly knows,
neither pain, nor grief?
Then neither knows he
what the secret of life is.

And listen now to Maulana Runi. How beautifully does he counsel:

بندہ می نالد بحق از دردِ خویش صد شکایت می کند از رنجِ نیش
حق ہمی گوید کہ آخر رنج و درد مرترا لا بہ کناں در است کرد
ایں گلہ زاں نعمتے کن کت زند

از درِ ما دور و مطرودت کنند

در حقیقت ہر عدو داروئی تست کیمیائے نافع و دلجوئے تست

کہ از و اندر گریزی در خلا استعانت جوئی از فضلِ خدا

در حقیقت دوستانت دشمنند

کہ ز حضرت دُور و مشغولت کنند

lamenting a man entered
the presence of the Lord—
to complain of a hundred or more,
private pains,

Said God in reply:
'Your anguish has only humbled you
and made you pray
to become righteous again.

'Lament instead the many favours
bestowed upon you,
which kept you away from Our Door.
Every enemy, if you really know
is a potion, an antidote—
for your moral failure,
your well-wisher and consoler.

'Does he not send you
to a cloister
where—alone—in the Great Presence
you ask for God's Grace and Mercy?

'who are your enemies?
your friends who take you away
from His presence,
who make you indifferent and negligent
towards Him'.

And how much pain and misery and suffering do men create for one for the world? We have Hitler's example before us.

But it may be objected, Why was man allowed to have so much power to put to such bad use? The answer is Why is man

given the freedom to use or abuse his powers? Freedom is freedom to do good or evil. If man were free but constrained and constrained to do only good, he would have ceased to be man and become instead an angel. Angels have no freedom. Angels have to carry out the tasks for which they are commissioned. But man was made for progress, for achievement, for going forward. He had to have the freedom to move and move in any direction he should choose. He should have been free to go forward or backward, go right or go wrong. Now if a man instead of going forward chooses to go backward, who is to blame except himself? The Holy Quran expresses the point pithily:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِيْ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍ ۝ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ اَسْفَلَ سٰفِلِيْنَ ۝

'Indeed We created man in the fairest of all forms: but We let him degrade himself to the lowest of the low. (95:8–9)

(XX)

Third source or motive of love is perfection, it may be in any field, any direction. Persian proverb says:

"کسبِ کمال کن کہ عزیزِ جہاں شوی"

achieve perfection in some field
that you may enjoy
popularity with men.

Hatim of Tai and Nosherwan the Just-why are they remembered with respect to this day? So are other people. Whoever achieves a level of perfection, it does not matter in what direction, endears himself to others, wins their esteem and their respect. We do not have to benefit ourselves, from the perfection of others. It is enough that someone has achieved perfection in some direction. He will have our affection, our admiration. Were it not so, why should we find ourselves praising and holding high in our esteem men who lived thousands of years

ago, Man, short, is so constituted—he must love perfection and become a devotee of persons who achieve perfection.

Hatim achieved perfection in magnanimity, Nosherwan in the administration of justice. Both command our respect to this day. Now let us take another step. Real perfection is to be found only in God. God has many attributes, each to perfection. So much so we are amazed to think of it. We may think of Him as Khaliq (Creator), as Rabb (Lord with concern for the needs of all His creation) as Rahman (the God who endows and rewards out of sheer grace), as Malik (Master with power and responsibility over all things, all persons) as Qadir (All-powerful), or as Aleem (All-knowing), He is and remains the Most Perfect Being. His perfection leaves us gaping.

Think only of how He created this vast universe. With what incredible perfection! From non-existence to existence!

کردی دو جہاں عیاں زقدرت
بے مادّہ و بے نیازِ انصار

Both worlds—here and hereafter
didst thou create,
with thine own unique power,
without matter pre-existing,
or anybody else helping.

ماہ را نیست طاقتِ ایں کار
کہ بتابد بروز چوں اختر
نیز خورشید را نہ پارائے
کہ نہد بر سریرِ شب پائے

The moon shines not
during the day:
the freedom it has during the night
snatched away
by day.

So is the sun unable
to step on night's throne,
and from its appointed sphere,
move away.

In the astonishing vastnesses of space, look at the heavenly bodies, their staggering size, their number, their mutual distances! How they remain suspended without supports, in constant movement along appointed orbits! And God only knows since when! If you want details, look up any book on astronomy. What wonders does space hold! With what perfection has our Creator accomplished this terrific task!

From the skies turn to the earth. This earth, incidentally is no more than a particle of dust compared with the Universe as a whole. Yet the perfections of which the earth is full send one into incredible ecstasies. Truth is that everything we find on this earth—man included—is a wonder of wonders. There are many sciences to study these wonders. Take up any one of these. It will fill you with awe when you begin to contemplate the wisdom, the design with which our Creator has executed His task in each separate department, each separate sphere. Vastness and wisdom everywhere, in every direction, so comprehensive that nothing small or great is left out.

In short, whether we look at the largest of stars, or the meanest worm, as soon as we begin to have a peep into reality, we find ourselves gone deep in wonder. Perfection is writ large on everything. On our earth, on the seas, the mountains, the trees, the stones, the minerals, plants, and on ourselves—all suspended and living in the unspeakable vastness of space.

ہر ذرّہ فشاند از تو نُورے ہر قطرہ براند از تو انہار
ہر سُوز عجائبِ تو شورے ہر جا ز غرائبِ تو اذکار

Each particle of matter—
a centre for the diffusion of Thy Light,
each drop of water—
a centre for emitting
waves of Thy praise:

Everywhere: they praise
Thy supernatural powers;
everywhere they discuss
the wonders Thou has created.

Scientists tell us that a single particle of dust has parts and parts which in number exceed the number of all the heavenly bodies in the skies, And not only this. These parts are joined one to another by laws full of wonders of their own. And yet man's knowledge of these is still slender. There is still very much more to know than we know already. The little we know has made it clear that Mathematics with all its advanced methods that have been discovered until today, is unable to comprehend the laws at work in the inner structure of a single particle of dust.

نہیں دیکھا ابھی تم نے مرے محبوب کا چہرہ جو دیکھو گے تمہارے علم کی پردہ دری ہوگی

You have seen not yet—
the face of my love:
when you do so you'll find
your ignorance exposed.

Forget the details. Only think how many generations of human beings—generations of this single species of mammals—have come into the world since the world began.

از عدم تا سوئے ہستی ہر زماں ہست یارب کارواں در کارواں

From nothing to existence and life,
Leaping they keep,
generation upon generation,
caravan upon caravan.

The most wonderful thing about these generations of multitudes is that every single individual among them is different from every other single individual. The fact of individual differences is not confined to the human species. It is universal. One particle of sand is different from all the other particles of sand. One leaf on the same tree is different from every other leaf. The lines on each leaf are different from the lines on every other leaf of the same tree. Same as, the lines on one man's hands are different from every one elses. And drops of rain-water! Each drop is different, an individual!

Then there is the soil. Same soil but what different kinds of vegetables, fruits, flowers, cereals, can grow on it. Also sugar-cane and also colocynth, one most sweet, the other most bitter, on the same soil!

The whole world—whatever is in it and whatever keeps happening on it under laws sanctioned by Our Creator is wonderful to the extreme. Scientific disciplines are only a search into the wonders we owe to our Creator. Those who know what the sciences do and how they go about their researches know that all sciences taken together are like an ocean dimensions of which we cannot measure, the ends of which we cannot reach.

علم دریائیست بے حد و کنار طالبِ علم است غوّاصِ بحار
گر ہزاراں سال باشد عمرِ او او نگردد سیر خود از جستجو

Knowledge, an ocean without edge a shore,
seeker of knowledge, a diver in this ocean:
a thousand years may be spent diving,
unsatisfied will remain his search for knowledge.

The Holy Quran hints at this great point in the verse.

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّيْ
لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّيْ وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا۔

Say, 'If ocean became ink
for the words of my Lord, surely
the ocean would be emptied before
the words of my Lord came to an end,
even though we brought the like
thereof as further help.' (L8:110)

Here the wonderful work of which Our Creator is the author is described in the Quran's own unique style. Search for knowledge brings to light this supreme reality. At every stage we arrive in our search the feeling that arises uppermost in our minds is that what we know is little or nothing compared with what we have yet to know. There is no comparison between the

known and the unknown. Progress in human knowledge keeps presenting this scene to us again and again.

معلوم م شد کہ ہیچ معلوم نہ شد

what I came to know—was
that there was nothing
I really did know.

And the poet Zauq has said the same thing in his beautiful style:

اس جہل کا ہے ذوق ٹھکانہ کچھ بھی
دانش نے کیا دل کو نہ دانا کچھ بھی
ہم جانتے تھے علم سے کچھ جانیں گے
جانا تو یہ جانا کہ نہ جانا کچھ بھی

This ignorance Oh Zauq!
has it any limits?
wisdom made us no wiser:
we expected much from knowledge;
but knowledge made us aware,
only of our ignorance.

If, in short, you look for perfection, you will find it only in God Almighty, our Creator. The Holy Quran invites us to ponder over our selves and our worlds, the many worlds. It is impossible we should ponder and yet our hearts should not become moved by love—love of the Perfect One, Whose powerful hand has created this wonderful world. To love perfection is of the essence of the nature of man.

There is a moral here for those who deny there is such a thing as love of God: Why does God—in the Holy Quran—invite us again and again to ponder over the evidences of Power—Power of the Originator of Heavens and the Earth—that lie before us? Why this repeated invitation, this appeal? Is it not because God wants to kindle the flame of love in our hearts? Awareness—

true awareness—of perfection anywhere is bound to create in our hearts love of Him Who is Perfection Personified:

عشقِ من پیدا و معشوقم نہاں
یار بیروں فتنۂ او در جہاں

My love is public, my beloved
is veiled;
my friend is away—
but his signs are talk of the day!

(XXI)

The fourth motive of love is love of one's own self. Nature has so made us. We all love ourselves. We seek naturally to advance ourselves, our interests, and to avoid our downfall and danger to our interests. We love our near relations also, others close to us and our friends. We seek their advance also, their prosperity. We think and know that their advance and their prosperity—in a way—is our own advance, our own prosperity. To the extent to which they rise in prestige and power, especially economic power, and in contacts, to that extent we ourselves seem to rise in these directions. Love of relations, friends, etc. turns out—in other words—to be love of our own selves. But love of ourselves—as soon as we discover the logical link—has to become love of God. Because to Him we owe our existence, our survival, our advance, our progress. Is it possible we should love ourselves but not love Him Whom we owe ourselves? Love sunshine but not the sun? Love the shade, but not the tree which provides the shade? Our own survival, our own advance require us to love God. For, it is God Who has created us, and provided us with all our needs, not only for our nourishment but also for other purposes and has given us things which give us joy and which seem beautiful. He has gifted us these things, subjugated them for us. And not for His Own Glory or Benefit (for, He needs nothing) but for us—for the love He has for us:

من نہ کردم خلق تا سُودے کنم
بلکہ تا بر بندگاں جُودے کنم

This world I did not make
to benefit Me,
rather 'twas for the sake
of those who seek after Me.

That we should pass by such infinite beneficence and grace and take no notice of it, is proof only of our own ignorance. Is it not?

(XXII)

Motives of love we have considered. We have shown that given those motives and springs, the Only One really worthy of our love is God. No other, not to that extent at least. We have drawn on common wisdom and common reason. Now let us turn to our scriptures, the Holy Quran and the Hadith. What have our Holy Books to tell us about the subject? Man, it is true, is bound to love God. Does God love man in return? We will see that God's love for man is clearly proved and promised. In the Holy Quran, God describes Himself as the One Most Approving, the One Most Understanding.

وَاللّٰهُ شَكُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ۔ (64:18)

Of such a Being—the One Readiest to approve, understand, and appreciate—we cannot have the least doubt that He will respond to our love by His. Storm of love in man's heart, but no response to it by God, this is impossible. To have any doubts on this would be senseless, wrong:

خدا پر تو پھر یہ گمان عیب ہے کہ وہ راحم و عالم الغیب ہے

This distrust of God,
is mean, very mean—
for, Gracious is He,
and knows the Unseen.

Let us first put together passages of the Holy Quran which bear on man's love for God. The passages are many. Again and again we are told that the relationship that subsists between God and man is a relationship of love. Our Deity is not to be worshipped only, but to be loved. He is our real and true love. Let us look at the passages:

١- وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا يُّحِبُّوْنَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّٰهِ ؕ

There are men who go for other deities, hold them equal to Allah and begin to give them love which they should only give to Allah. This is not the way of true believers. True believers love Allah the most. (2:165)

قُلْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝

The Holy Prophet is told to tell others this: If we profess to love God, then we should follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet. He—the Holy Prophet—is the person to show us the way to true love. If we do this, not only shall we ourselves achieve true love, we will receive love of God in return, receive it in the shape of forgiveness and mercy. God is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. (3:31).

اتباعش سینہ نورانی کند
باخبر از یارِ پنہانی کند

To follow him,
is to light one's heart;
it takes us near Him—
Who lives apart

The Holy Quran tells us again and again that belief in God inevitably means love of God.

٣- يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِى اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُّحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّوْنَهٗٓ-

'O believers, whosoever turns away from his faith, Allah will assuredly bring a people whom He loves, and who love Him.' (5:55)

How is man to go about loving God? What practical steps is he to take? Thus

٤-وَاٰتَى الْمَالَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ-

'and spends his wealth
out of, love for Him'. (2:178)

And then

5.

وَيُطْعِمُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ مِسْكِيْنًا وَّيَتِيْمًا وَّاَسِيْرًا ۝ اِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللّٰهِ لَا نُرِيْدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَآءً وَّلَا شُكُوْرًا ۝

They give food, for the love of Him to the needy, the orphan, the captive: We feed you only for the face of God—we desire no return from you and no thanks (76:9)

And

6.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّٰهِ-

But those who believe are stronger
in their love of Allah. (2:162)

And

7.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وُدًّا ۝

'Surely those who believe and do righteous deeds—unto them the Most Gracious Lord shall tender the gift of love'. (19:97)

Now let us enumerate the passages of the Holy Book which speak pointedly of God's love for man and also tell us what different kinds of men does God love:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ۔ (بقرہ)

'Allah loves those with goodwill towards others'

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ۔ (بقرہ)

'Allah loves those who incline towards Him'

وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ۔ (توبہ)

'Allah loves those who are clean of heart'

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ (آل عمران)

'Allah loves those who put their trust in Him'

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ۔ (توبہ)

'Allah loves those who fear Him'

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ

'Allah loves those who fight in His cause'

وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ (آل عمران)

'Allah loves those who prove steadfast in trials'

What eloquent and transparent affirmations do we have here of God's love for man! Pursuasive too. Not the least doubt is left that God loves man and that it is man's obligation to love God.

Of the attributes of God the two which come first to our notice—on opening the Holy Book—are the attributes of *Rahman* and *Rahim*, attributes of Mercy—Mercy of two kinds, mercy which comes of un-earned beneficence and mercy which brings abundant return for anything we are able to do.

Then we have it in the Holy Quran.

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللّٰهَ اَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ اَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوْا فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ۚ

'Say, Call upon Allah, or call upon the Most Gracious Lord, whomsoever you call upon, to Him belong the Names, Most Beautiful'. (17:111)

That is, Allah—think of Him as the Deity worthy of worship or as the Gracious One to Whom you must feel grateful. He is the Possessor of all the best and the most beautiful names.

The Bismillah so well known and so frequently met with in the Holy Quran, Viz; 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful', points to the same thing.

God is loving, merciful, concerned. The attributes *Rahman* and *Rahim* (besides occurring in the Bismillah) occur more than fifty times in other places in the Holy Book. In the Sura *Baruj* we have the name *Al-Wadud* usually translated as one loved or lovely. Another name is *Wali* which means *Friend* or *Companion* or *Comrade*.

If we look at the long list of the attributive (Names of God) mentioned in the Holy Quran and Hadith, we will find that a greater number of them bear on God's Mercy, Grace, Concern, and Love. Why this should be so is obvious. The attributes of mercy is a root attribute the mother of all attributes so to say. The attribute of Mercy is at work all the time in the world. True, we also have the attribute of Wrath. But this also stems from the root-attribute of Mercy. Wrath is not a basic attribute, not one of the personal names of God. If there is no rebellion, no disobedience among men, there will be no occasion for divine wrath. But why forget the other Names of God mentioned in the Quran and Hadith. *Ghaffur*, for instance, the Dispenser of

Forgiveness, *Ghaffur* or the Great Forgiver, *Salam*, the Dispenser of Peace. There is also the name al-Afw, One Who writes off our mistakes, our misdeeds. *al-Wahhab*, the Donor, *Al-Hakim*, the Tolerant, *al-Sabur*, the Patient, One Who overlooks unmannerliness, rudeness, *al-Tawwab*. One Who turns to us again and again, with mercy *al-Barru*, the Ultimate Good, Nothing but good. The Names of God, in sum, are names of mercy, of grace, of love, of magnanimity, of *Rahmaniyat, Rahimiyat*. Let us have a special look at hints on the nature of God which we find in the Hadith, traditions or sayings, traced ultimately to the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace):

اَحِبُّوا اللّٰهَ لِمَا يَغْذُوْكُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ نِّعْمَتِهٖ وَاَحِبُّوْنِیْ لِحُبِّ اللّٰهِ (ترمذی بروایت ابن عباس)۔

'Love God, the Holy Prophet said, because He keeps His favour on you every morn, that dawns. And love me because God loves me.' (Tirmidhi)

Love of God is one of the essential ingredients of Belief in God. A man asked, 'What is belief?' The Holy Prophet replied, 'To love God and the Prophet more than anything else.' In the tradition books of Bukhari and Muslim (according to Anas) we are told that the Holy Prophet said.

لَا يُؤْمِنُ اَحَدُكُمْ حَتّٰى يَكُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ اَحَبَّ اِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا۔

No one really believes unless God and the Prophet are held above everything other than God and the Prophet, in the matter of love and regard.

The prayers the Holy Prophet taught us are accented with the duty and obligation of love. For instance, he taught us to pray like this:

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِیْ

حُبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ اَحَبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَا يُقَرِّبُنِیْ اِلٰی حُبِّكَ وَاجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ اَحَبَّ اِلَیَّ مِنَ الْمَآءِ الْبَارِدِ۔ (ترمذی حاکم)

God, give me your love, and give me the love of those who love you, and the love of things which bring me near to you, and make for me my love for you sweeter and cooler than the sweetest and coolest drink of water (Tirmidhi)

Another prayer runs like this:

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِيْ حُبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ يَّنْفَعُنِيْ فِيْ حُبِّكَ (ترمذی)

O Allah, gift to me
your love and the
love of those of advantage
to me in my love of you (Tirmidhi)

An Arab of the desert came to the Holy Prophet and said.

O Prophet of God, I
have no deeds to
show, neither prayers,
nor fasts, nor any
acts of charity My
capital, if I have
any, is the love of
God and the Prophet
nothing else. The
Holy Prophet replied,

"اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ"

Be of good cheer,
for, the law is
everyone will
find himself in
the company of these
whom he loves.

Anas Says. I have not seen Muslims, pleased more with anything else, after, of course, their faith in Islam.

In the course of a battle panic reigned on all sides. Mothers had become separated from their children, brothers from brothers. A mother, frantic with fear lest she had lost her child, would pick up every child she met and hold it up to herself, feed it with her milk. The Holy Prophet—mercy unto all—sighted her and turned to his companions and said, "Look at this

woman, and at her concern, Would she hurl into a blazing fire her own child, with her own hands?" The companions said, "No it's impossible". The Holy Prophet said, "You agree, therefore, that this woman, this mother, could not love her child more. But I tell you God loves His servants much more than this mother loves her child." (Bukhari)

It is also reported that the Holy Prophet was returning from a battle when a woman holding her child came up to him and asked, "Prophet of God, tell me, does not God love His creatures more than a mother loves her children?" "Yes', said the Holy Prophet "most certainly He does." "Would a mother, then, hurl her child into hell, with her hands?" The Holy Prophet was moved and could not speak. Then raising his head said, "God punishes only those, who out of disloyalty, begin to talk of more than One God." (Nasai).

Then we are told, the Holy Prophet, friend, beloved of his God was sitting, a few others with him. A companion came to join in who had with him a bird—a mother—with her brood wrapped in a piece of cloth. He said, "Prophet of God, I found these little birds on a bush and picked them up in this cloth. As soon as I did this the mother-bird began to circle over my head. I opened the cloth a little. At once the mother dropped on her young." The Holy Prophet said, "Are you surprised at a mother's love for her offspring? By Allah Who has sent me with truth I say this, that Allah's love for His creatures is much greater than this mother's love for her offspring." (Mishkat)

These citations from the Holy Quran and Hadith are enough to show how great is Allah's love for His creatures. They also show that His creatures also—who understand and know—love Allah, their Creator. Those who are not impressed by this spectacle and continue to hold it in suspicion should ponder and think. The relation between God and man is not—cannot be—the dry, lifeless relation of master and servant, commands on one side, obedience and submission on the other. No, it is much more than that. Certainly love has logical and psychological priority over submission. Love comes first, then comes submission.

At the same time we must remember that ordinary analogies do not help where the object is to understand God. God is Unique.

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

There is no one, no thing
which is like Him, says the Holy Quran. (42:12).

So the relationship of love between God and man is also unique, different from ordinary human love relations. God's love for man has only a similarity with man's love for man. It is analogous to it. When God is angry with any of his men, again the situation is only analogous to a corresponding human situation. Remember analogous, not identical. Because there is a difference. When one man is angry with another the anger makes the angry man unhappy. The fit of anger has its repercussions. Tranquility and peace of mind are gone at least for the time being. God's anger is different. His anger has no repercussions for God Himself. He is Holy, free from such weaknesses. Men disobey and earn the anger of God. But this makes no difference to divine peace. Divine anger results in punishment. But this is only a way of saying. The punishment is earned. It is the natural consequence of a misdeed. God's part is only to let the misdoer see what the misdeed has brought on him.

(XXIII)

A question may yet be asked. The descriptions of hell in the Quran—and the apparently strong language used—do not seem to fit in with our image of the God of Mercy—*al-Rahman*. Again, the answer is, look carefully at the words used. No verse which says that God is pleased when He punishes. Nor is He like worldly despots with powers of life and death over men who punish when they are displeased and reward when they are pleased. This is arbitrary behaviour appropriate to human despots. Not to the God of the Holy Quran. The Quran has a philosophy of punishment and reward. Hell and paradise—of the Holy Quran—are a part of this philosophy. The whole matter is full of wisdom, determined in fact, by the requirements of nature. It fits in beautifully with the nature—God-given

nature—of man. Everything is endowed with a nature, a character appropriate to it. This nature confers certain properties on its possessor. Fire burns, water cools, poison kills, its antidote saves life. So, there is nothing in the world without its own appointed properties. Without this order of properties—their effects and repercussions—this world and all that it contains, would have been sheer confusion. Everything would have been in a state of permanent disarray. Supposing we had wanted to warm something we could not have trusted fire to yield the expected heat and to warm the thing as we wanted. May be fire would begin to behave in quite a strange, unexpected, manner. Could life have had a smooth reliable course in such a case? Could we have planned anything? Could we have executed our plans?

That things have certain appointed properties, that these properties are reliable, gives us an orderly world, a world ruled by law and wisdom. Except for such orderliness, we could have had no life worth living, no possibilities of growth and development, and no progress.

So, here we are, just as law—the law of properties, of causes and effects—rules the world of matter, so does it rule the world of mind and morals. Good deeds have good properties, good effects, good repercussions. So have bad deeds, bad properties, bad effects, bad repercussions. The world of matter could not have been what it is without the law of properties and their consequences. The world of morals also would have lost its significance without such a law. Fancy what would have been the case, if good deeds had come to have bad consequences and bad deeds, good consequences. We could have trusted neither good deeds nor bad. We would have failed to make head or tail of either. Our deeds would have lost all meaning.

The Garden and the Gehenna—described pictorially and repeatedly—in the Holy Quran have just this meaning. The descriptions embody the law or laws which govern morals, good and bad actions, and their natural good and bad consequences. Good that results from good works is called *Thawab* (spiritual reward). The evil that results from evil works is called *Azab* (spiritual punishment). Spiritual rewards—with the appropriate metaphors used for them in the descriptions of the Quran—belong to paradise, the Garden of Hereafter promised in the Quran. Spiritual punishments belong to the Gehenna also

promised in the Quran. What the Garden and the Gehenna are in fact, nobody would know, not in this world. We have explained this before. The True nature of these states or places or institutions is above our understanding and defeats any descriptions we can invent for them. We can say this with certainty that the descriptions of the Gehenna are descriptions of the consequences of evil choices, evil actions. Why are the descriptions repeated? To serve as warnings at every step, at every point of decision, of choice. And what is this but a fulfilment or a requirement of the Mercy of God? At every point, at every step, the choice of right action, as well as the avoidance of wrong action is possible. A reminder is called for, therefore, and is given appropriately wheresoever it is required. So that man may be saved from the bad consequences of bad choices.

If there are still those who will not understand, and cling to an image—a wrong image—of their own making of the God of the Quran, then who is to blame?

سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ.

'Glorified be Allah—
far above their
understanding is He.'
(21:23).

Here some people raise another question. Why are not rewards and punishments of the same order as the deeds from which they result. The deed is worship, the reward is the Garden. Worship is one thing and the delights of the Garden, quite another. In reply we should remember that common experiences furnishes examples of deeds of one kind and rewards of another. A labourer moves stones and bricks but his reward is cash, dollars, or pounds or rupees. Physical labour becomes converted into silver. What difficulty is involved in this sort of translation? None at all. If there is no difficulty, why make any difficulty about the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter? Especially when we know that in the Hereafter, our Creator will manifest His Creativity and His Concern for man's progress in a new and entirely unique manner. The Holy Quran clearly hints at this:

نُنْشِئَكُمْ فِيْ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ (الواقعہ آیت ۶۲)

'developing you into a form which
at present you know not.' (56:62)

The Garden and Gehenna of the Hereafter are the result of human choices and actions in our life Here. It, therefore, seems important that we turn to the Holy Quran for descriptions of human actions and of how they are recorded and taken into account in the dispensing of consequences.

Says the Holy Quran:

فَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ

مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَّرَهٗ ۝ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَّرَهٗ ۝ (الزلزال: ۸ و ۹)

'Then whoso does an atom's weight of
good will see it. And whoso does an
atom's weight of evil will also see it' (99:8–9)

Again it says

وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ۝ (آل عمران ۲۵)

And when every soul shall be paid
in full what it has earned, and
they shall not be wronged. (3:25)

And again

لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِّنْ اَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا (حجرات)

He will not detract anything
from your deeds. Surely Allah is
Most Forgiving, Merciful. (49:15)

About how our deeds are recorded the Holy Quran says:

وَكُلَّ اِنْسَانٍ اَلْزَمْنٰهُ طَائِرَهٗ

فِيْ عُنُقِهٖ ..... اِقْرَاْ كِتَابَكَ كَفٰى بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيْبًا ۝ (بنی اسرائیل: ۱۴-۱۵)

And every man's work have we fastened
to his neck; and on the Day of Resurrection
We shall bring out for him a book which
he will find wide open.

'Read thy book. Sufficient is thy own soul
this day as reckoner against thee' (17:14–15)

Ponder over this and see how clearly it is laid down that a man's actions are *his*, their recording also is done by him, is part of *his* own nature. Nothing to complain, therefore, about the record itself. It is said:

مَالِ هٰذَا الْكِتٰبِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً اِلَّآ اَحْصٰهَا (الكهف:٤٩)

'What kind of a book is this! It leaves
out nothing small or great but has recorded it.' (18:50)

In short, every action, big or small, good or bad leaves its trace on the mind of man. The traces thus recorded over a lifetime begin to speak for themselves in life Hereafter. Its quality its value and worth good or bad, not quite evident in this life, becomes quite evident in the life to come. There is a difference, and an important one. During our life here the causal laws, the properties of things and their consequences are inexorable, merciless. They allow no exceptions. But in the Hereafter the Moral Law of Rewards and Punishments becomes subject to the unlimited Mercy and Forgiveness of God. Believers are commanded never to despair of Divine Mercy. To despair is to sin. Hope is held aloft and even sinners are addressed affectionately as 'O My servants.' The form of address is reassuring morale-raising. Says God:

قُلْ يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ جَمِيْعًا ۭ (زمر ٥٤)

Say, 'O My servants who have committed
excesses againt their own souls.' Despair
not of the mercy of Allah, Surely Allah
forgives all sins. (39:54)

هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ۔ (زمر)

Or,

Verily He is Most Forgiving, Merciful. (39:54)

Or

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ (انعام ۵۵)

Your Lord has taken it upon Himself
to show mercy, (6:55)

The most encouraging and sustaining message is contained in the laconic half-verse

رَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

'My Mercy encompasseth all things.' (7:157)

We should need nothing more after this comprehensive and categorical announcement, to feel reassured and optimistic.

God's Mercy and Forgiveness are available at all times to everyone and every-where. He says Himself:

يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثْبِتُ ۖ وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ۔

Allah effaces whatever,
He pleases and establishes
whatever He pleases
and with Him is
the fountain of all
commandments. (13:40)

In the same strain God announces the merciful law

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

good works liquidate
the effect of evil ones. (11:115)

Not only are evils forgiven, their consequences are effaced, all traces removed. And the beauty is that it is within man's competence to earn this blessed result. In the Holy Quran we

have a roaring ocean of Divine Mercy presented to us. But many fail to see it. They have to blame themselves for it.

گر نہ بیند بروز شپرہ چشم چشمۂ آفتاب را چہ گناہ

If your weak vision fails you during the day,
it is no fault of the sun.

(XXIV)

Love which God has for men and which men naturally have for God, we have shown proof of, from the Holy Quran and Hadith. The question now remains whether we will ever see this Real Beloved of all, whether we will ever meet Him. On this we have the following verses of the Holy Quran, clearly promising the much sought for meeting:

۱- وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ ۝ اِلٰى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ ۝ (سورۃ القیامۃ آیت ۲۳-۲۴)

Some faces on that day will be bright,
looking eagerly towards their Lord, (75:23 and 24)

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْاِنْسَانُ اِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلٰقِيْهِ ۝

Thou, O man, art verily labouring
towards thy Lord, a hard labouring;
then thou art going to meet Him. (84:7)

وَقَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا ضَلَلْنَا
فِى الْاَرْضِ ءَاِنَّا لَفِىْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ۭ بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّهِمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ۝

And they say, 'What.' when we
are lost in the earth, shall we
then become a new creation? Nay, but
they are disbelievers in the meeting
of their Lord. (32:11)

كَلَّآ إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوبُونَ ۝ ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ ۝

Nay, they will surely be debarred from *seeing* their Lord on that day.

Then, verily, they will burn in Hell. (83:16–17)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَوٰةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِنَا غَٰفِلُونَ ۝
أُولَٰٓئِكَ مَأْوَىٰهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ۝

Those who look not for the meeting with Us and are content with the life of this world and feel at rest therewith, and those who are heedless of Our Signs—

It is these whose abode is Fire, because of what they earned. (10:8–9)

فَنَذَرُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا فِى طُغْيَٰنِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ۝

But We leave those who look not for the meeting with Us to wander distractedly in their transgression. (10:12)

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِـَٔايَٰتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَآئِهِۦٓ أُولَٰٓئِكَ يَئِسُوا مِن رَّحْمَتِى وَأُولَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝

Those who disbelieve in the Signs of Allah and the meeting with Him—it is they who have despaired of My mercy. And they will have a grievous punishment. (29:24)

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ
وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ۝ اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۭ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۭ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَاۗئِ
رَبِّهِمْ لَكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝

They know only the *outer aspect* of the life of this world, and of the Hereafter they are utterly unmindful.

Do they not reflect in their own minds? Allah has not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between the two but in accordance with the requirements of wisdom and for a fixed term. But many men believe not in the meeting of their Lord. (30:8–9)

، وَاسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَ
الصَّلٰوةِ ۭ وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيْرَةٌ اِلَّا عَلَي الْخٰشِعِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَظُنُّوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ
: اَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ ۝

And seek help with patience and with prayer; and this indeed is hard except for the humble in spirit.

Who know for certain that they will meet their Lord, and that to Him will they return. (2:46–47)

اُولٰۗىِٕكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَاۗىِٕهٖ فَحَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا ۝

Those are they who disbelieve in the Signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him. So their works are vain, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight. (18:106)

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّنَهَرٍ ۝ فِيْ مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيْكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ ۝

Verily, the righteous will be
in the midst of Gardens and streams,

In the seat of truth with an omnipotent King. (54:55 and 56)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا
إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ
بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ۝

Say, 'I am only a man like yourselves;
but I have received the revelation that
your God is only One God. So let him who
hopes to meet his Lord do good deeds, and
let him join no one in the worship of his Lord.' (18:111)

And let us never forget what the Holy Prophet himself has said on this subject:.

سَتَرَوْنَ رَبَّكُمْ كَمَا يَرَوْنَ هٰذَا الْقَمَرَ -

'You will see your
Lord as you see
the yonder full-
moon.'

It becomes clear from these citations out of the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Holy Prophet, that the ultimate end of human life is a vision of the Lord God, of His Divine Beauty and Loveliness. The means to this End consist of works pleasing to Him and flowing out of the fullness of love. This is the substance of Islam and of the teaching of Islam. In short there is the Ultimate End and there are the means to it. But some would stop at the works. That is, at thoughts and deeds which amount to submission and obedience to the Divine Will and Person. No more. Submission according to them is *the* Substance, *the* End. There is nothing further or beyond. Loving God and being loved by Him, for instance. Then we ask, what is the point in prescribing duties to God and duties to Man, to fellow-men, that is to say? It is because God, according to them, is like an earthly potentate, in sore need of submission and obedience by men,

His serfs? so that, if submission is not forth-coming, the potentate's rule will be in straits? and finally come to an end? No, no, God Almighty has no such need, need of worship by men, or their obedience.

من نہ گردم پاک از تسبیحِ شاں
پاک ہم ایشاں شوند و در فشاں

Is it their praises
which make Me Holy?
No, they become holy,
who praise Me.

Further citations from the Holy Quran make this point utterly clear. Says the Holy Quran:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهٖ وَمَنْ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ۝

Whoso does right, it is for his own
soul; and whoso does evil, it will only
go against it. And thy Lord is not at
all unjust to His servants (41:47)

And again:

: فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝

The One self-sufficient Lord
has no need of this universe of worlds. (3:98)

The actions of men do not lie outside:
do they?

And yet again:

لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ (البقرة: ٢٨٦)

It shall have the regard it earns,
and it shall get the punishment it incurs (2:287)

To clinch the subject, as it were, we have the specially authentic saying of the Holy Prophet:

"يَا عِبَادِيْ لَوْ اَنَّ اَوَّلَكُمْ وَاٰخِرَكُمْ وَاِنْسَكُمْ وَجِنَّكُمْ كَانُوْا عَلٰى اَتْقٰى قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ وَّاحِدٍ مِّنْكُمْ مَا زَادَ فِيْ مُلْكِيْ شَيْئًا - يَا عِبَادِيْ لَوْ اَنَّ اَوَّلَكُمْ وَاٰخِرَكُمْ وَاِنْسَكُمْ وَجِنَّكُمْ كَانُوْا عَلٰى اَفْجَرِ قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ وَّاحِدٍ مِّنْكُمْ مَا نَقَصَ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ مُلْكِيْ شَيْئًا - يَا عِبَادِيْ لَوْ اَنَّ اَوَّلَكُمْ وَاٰخِرَكُمْ وَاِنْسَكُمْ وَجِنَّكُمْ قَامُوْا فِيْ صَعِيْدٍ وَّاحِدٍ تَسْاَلُوْنِيْ فَاَعْطَيْتُ كُلَّ اِنْسَانٍ مَّسْئَلَتَهٗ مَا نَقَصَ ذٰلِكَ مِمَّا عِنْدِيْ - اِلَّا كَمَا يَنْقُصُ الْمِخْيَطُ اِذَا دُخِلَ الْبَحْرَ - يَا عِبَادِيْ اِنَّمَا هِيَ اَعْمَالُكُمْ اُحْصِيْهَا لَكُمْ ثُمَّ اُوَفِّيْكُمْ اِيَّاهَا - فَمَنْ وَجَدَ خَيْرًا فَلْيَحْمَدِ اللّٰهَ وَمَنْ وَجَدَ غَيْرَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَا يَلُوْمَنَّ اِلَّا نَفْسَهٗ" (مسلم عن ابی

God Almighty has said O My men! If all those of you who have lived before you and all those who will come after you, all common men and all the leaders among you, were to become as pious and pure as the one most pious and pure among you, even then, no increase would be made to my God-hood. Similarly, O My men, if all those of you who have gone before and all those who will come after you, common men as well as your Leaders were to become as vicious as the most vicious among you, no decrease would be made to my God-hood. And O My men! If all those of you who have gone before and all those who are coming later were to assemble together in one place and ask of Me anything they could possibly ask, then even had I given everyone everything he asked for, even then it would make no difference to My Treasures of Mercy and Forgiveness; may be as little as the amount of water that sticks on the point of a needle dipped in a sea. O My men, it is your own works and their consequences which I keep in safe keeping, on which I keep My eye, and which I make over to you without any addition or subtraction. Therefore, if there is one who finds in his record anything to his credit, Let him praise Allah, and if there is one who finds anything to his discredit, let him blame no one but himself. (Muslim)

Is any doubt or uncertainty now left on the subject of the Ultimate End of our actions? All actions, all works, duties, are intended to promote man's own progress. Fasting is prescribed, but only that *You* may become pious; Sacrifice is commended, but with the warning that

لَنْ يَّنَالَ اللّٰهَ لُحُوْمُهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا وَلٰكِنْ يَّنَالُهُ التَّقْوٰى مِنْكُمْ

'it is not the blood
or the flesh of the animal
that reaches God—
what reaches Him
is your piety'. (22:28)

Repeated exhortation to piety—*Taqwa*—is to be found in the Holy Quran.

اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ

'Remain aware of your duty to Allah,'

The end of *Taqwa* is closeness to God, to God Himself. Those who achieve *Taqwa* (piety) are called *Muttaqeen*. (the pious). And the pious are described thus:

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (پ۲: ۱۹۵)

Know it for certain that
Allah is *with* the pious, (2:195)

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (توبہ آیت ۵-۸) وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (جاثیہ آیت ۲۰)

Allah is a *friend*
of the pious. (45:20)

وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (اعراف ۱۲۹)

Only the pious
succeed in the
end. (7:129)

وَاِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ لَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ (ص-۵۰)

Remember, for
the pious awaits
an excellent resort. (36:50)

The upshot now is clear and simple to understand. We seek closeness to God, that we may achieve the end of our lives. The way to this is to acquire the qualities, the virtues approved by God. Good deeds have—as their object—the attainment of piety, *Taqwa*, 'Create in you the character—the attributes—of Allah,' said the Holy Prophet. Which means our aim is to try and imitate the character of God. Imitating God would be to attain closeness to God. God, the Holy One, finding us patterned to His Own perfect attributes will be pleased with us. Closeness to Him will be the reward of those who imitate Him.

کوئی اس پاک سے جو دل لگاوے
کرے پاک آپ کو تب اُس کو پاوے

If there be one who will—
love the Holy One!
let him first cleanse himself—
only thus will he find Him.

We find the same thing in wordly relations. Good men accompany good men and bad men accompany bad men. They say 'Birds of a feather flock together.' God is the Holiest of Holies. Those who will be close to Him will have to acquire holiness themselves. Good deeds done and bad deeds avoided will usher them to His august Presence. We should be able to understand it too. A man smeared with dirt and filth whose stinking closeness you loathe cannot have access to a king. In fact even ordinary men will run away from his companionship. This being the rule of life, is it any wonder that evil deeds—deeds disapproved by God—deprive you of nearness to God and of a view of His Person. That is why evil deeds are forbidden.

In short the ultimate End for which we live is nearness to God for the sake of the Beautific Vision and the Blessed and Beauti-

ful Presence. On this all are agreed. The means to this End are good works. On this also we are agreed, but some of us become involved in the means and begin to confuse the means with the End. Love of God as the Ultimate End is forgotten and dismissed as a proper End of human life. But if we love not some one, shall we strive to get anywhere near Him? This is what some people don't seem to understand.

اصل اللہ سے لگاوٹ ہے
ورنہ مذہب میں سب بناوٹ ہے

Attachment to Allah is the real thing.
Should this be not,
then faith is appearance,
appearance only.

Naturally one begins to suspect that at bottom it is concern—exclusive concern—for the life of this world, for political prosperity, for Empire and Government, that has brought about this indifference to God and to love of God.

Islam, they seem to think, came to build and run an Empire, a military state. The institutional prayers and other exercises prescribed by Islam, promote discipline, social cohesion. No wonder, those who like to dismiss love of God from their thinking, lay great stress on the external forms and observances of Islam and think these exercises most relevant and entirely sufficient for an Islamic life. But they damage the view of Islam as a unique and perfect *Weltanschauung* for life Here and life Hereafter. Empire and Government are ends as well—or even better—served by people and cultures distanced from Islam. Did not Britain create a vast Empire in history, an empire on which the sun did not set? And yet what spiritual exercises earned this Empire for Britain?

Islam did not come to create an Empire. Only—under divine decree and with divine help—it attained to a measure of political power and found itself the builder of an Empire (vaster perhaps than any other known in history). And this was to illustrate its political philosophy as well as to demonstrate the over-all sovereignty of God. As the Holy Quran says.

Permission to fight is given to those
against whom war is made: because they
have been wronged, and remember Allah has
power to help them (22:40)

Those who came later—unfortunately—began to take a warped view of this destiny of Islam, they began to think Empire was the End. So, they became involved in politics, in this worldliness. They forgot that this was not in the minds of those who achieved the early victories of Islam. Those acquainted with the soul and spirit of Islam know well that the real aim of Islam was to teach believers the art of loving God. Beautifully and most effectively had the Holy Prophet embedded this love in the hearts of his followers. True Muslims were God-lovers:

جو مسلمان تھا اللہ کا شیدائی تھا

A Muslim true,
was one who loved Allah
through and through.

It could not be otherwise. The cup-bearer of the divine elixir had served his followers with the cup, to their fill. They had been taught ever to remain drunk with this other-wordly love the seed of which had been sown deep in their hearts.

اسی کے سدا عشق کا دم بھرو تم
اسی کی طلب میں مرو گر مرو تم

Love Him and only Him,
die if you must,
in search only
of Him.

(XXV)

It must be a grand—very grand—purpose for which God created man. When we ponder over this we become acutely aware of two things. One is that sheer creation—of existence out

of non-existence—is a miracle of the highest order. The birth of man is a manifestation of divine creativity. If man had not been born, divine creativity would have gone without fulfilment. The second thing we become aware of on pondering over the grand purpose for which man could have been created is that Allah our Creator is *Rahman* (the Most Gracious) and *Rahim* (Ever Merciful). These two attributes of Mercy for their manifestation demanded the creation of one who could become the object of these attributes: Says God in the Holy Quran:

إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ ۚ وَلِذَٰلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ ۗ (سورۃ ہود آیت ۱۲۰)

'Except those on whom thy Lord has had mercy, and for this has He created them. (11:120)

The attribute of Mercy—like other divine attributes—is infinite, limitless. Our Creator created us out of dust and raised our aspiration high, as high as the Creator Himself. We were made so as to meet Him. Except for such high aspiration and purpose, our Creator's Grace and Benevolence would have fallen short of full manifestation. Had Allah given us everything—all that is in the heavens and the earth—but not promised us a vision of His Own Person, His Bounty and Beneficence could have proved less than perfect, less than full. But when He appointed *Himself* as the End of our life, the difficulty was over. A greater purpose than the Beautific Vision—vision of the Creator Himself—could not be conceived. Greater Bounty and Beneficence there could not be. More than this could not be desired.

اس درجہ ترقی خاک کو دی وہ ہوش میں آکر شوق بنی
اس شوق کا خود منظورِ نظر سبحان اللہ! سبحان اللہ

This humble dust
How high hath He raised!
Made it conscious,
then set it on a search,
and Himself became

the Object of this search!
Let Allah be praised!
And praised be Allah!

It is tragic ignorance on our part that we should show great concern, great attraction for the ephemeral goods of this life—for offspring, for wealth, for power over others, for prestige, for honour, for a good name, for professional excellence, but for Our Creator, we should have no room in our hearts. We seem to show great concern for the externals of our duty to God, really only the *means* of attaining nearness to Him. But we should yet deny we can have a relationship of love with Him. This is surprising in the extreme. What becomes of our daily prayers in this case? Are not our movements, our pauses, our prostrations, sheer physical processes which we carry through as a habit, under social, institutional, or psychological pressures? and fasts mere demonstrations of physical endurance? our pilgrimage a journey undertaken for its excitement, purposeless in any large sense? The Holy Prophet described the daily prayers

قُرَّةُ عَيْنِيْ فِي الصَّلٰوةِ۔

'as something
that lends coolness
to my eyes.'

Ponder over these words, can physical movements alone—standing erect, hands clasped, half-prostrating, full-prostrating and pauses in between—lend coolness to eyes? No, no, Prayer which does not melt the heart is not prayer. It is rather a penalty we pay. True worship comes of love. Worship which is without this ingredient of love is no worship. It is physical labour, physical exercise.

شوق تیرا اگر نہ ہو میری نماز کا امام
میرا قیام بھی حجاب میرا سجود بھی حجاب

If love be not my leader
in my prayers,
vain are my pauses
and vain my prostrations.

How truly did Yahya b. Maaz say that love as little as a grain of mustard-seed is worth 70 years of prayers said without the accompaniment of love.

پیشِ حق یک نالہ از روئے نیاز بہ ز عمرِ بے نیاز اندر نماز

In the presence of the Lord
one cry that rises from the heart
is better than a life-time
of prayer without a heart.

You read accounts of the Holy Prophet, of how he prayed, in books on his life? Ponder over his example? You have read—haven't you—that often when the Holy Prophet prayed, the throbbing sobs within his breast would sound like a boiling pot. Would you still think there is no such thing as love of God, carrying out commandments, nothing more? But don't forget that the Holy Prophet's life was a life of love—love of the Most Perfect Being, our Creator. You know he spent years in the cave Hira and there day in and day out he prayed and prayed. Could he have done this without being motivated by love? He had no religious law revealed to him yet. It could not be said that he was carrying out commandments of a sort, only prescribed ritual. And then you know what his detractors used to say when they met and discussed between themselves:

Muhammad is mad,
mad in love,
with his God.

This is what they used to think and say.

از شرابِ شوقِ جاناں بیخودے
در سرش برخاک بنہادہ سرے

Beside himself with love of God,
Thinking only of Him, went about he,
his head bowed,
in remembrance of Him.

Islam is a religion designed for the nature of man. Our Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) was a perfect model for all human beings in every aspect of their lives. This, in accordance with the famous verse in the Holy Quran:

لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

For you in the
messenger of Allah
is a perfect model. (33:22)

On this point of a natural relationship of love between God and man also, the Holy Prophet had to be a perfect model for all of us. And we are not disappointed, as on other dimensions and in other ways, the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace), in the matter of man's love for his Creator, provided a perfect example. His whole life is witness to this.

Those who fight shy of or respond with a straight rejection to this idea of a love-relation with God, object that absorption with this idea will destroy our initiative and weaken our interest in the practical problems of life. But exactly this objection is raised by the detractors of religion against religion. They describe religion as an opiate for the masses. But the truth is quite otherwise. True love of God does not make men lazy. It does not send them to cloisters and shrines to live useless sheltered lives. True religion is not an opiate for the masses making them lazy and unfit for the struggle of life. The life of our Holy Prophet is a practical rebuttell of these charges against our view of God and of our obligation to love Him. If any man living in this world has loved his Creator, then it was Muhammed the Prophet of the Desert (on whom be peace). But at the same time he was a model of unremitting hard work and continuous struggle against heavy odds. History cannot furnish another example like him. On top of his personal example he gave the world a faith that breathed new life into a people as good as dead.

(XXVI)

We have to remember also that man is weak and helpless. He does not know what is in store for him only tomorrow morn. The

most powerful men—with all their wealth and following—are really speaking weak and helpless. And every man is a bundle of needs, a creature of wants, a *Fakir* (lit, a dependent) in the words of the Quran.

أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ (فاطر-آیت ۱۶)

it is you who are
dependent upon Allah (35:16)

Needy man is well depicted by a poet:

عالم ہمہ درد است و دوا می خواہد از خوانِ کرم برگ و نوا می خواہد
کس بے حاجت نمی تواند دیدن درویش غذا شاہ اشتہا می خواہد

The world all in pain,
seeks a potion for relief,
or, from God's bounty
anything, anything else it can have.
No one is without need, however—
a King needs good appetite,
a dervish his feed.

Thus, on the one hand weakness and helplessness, on the other powers and resources combined with beneficence and charity! And we! we should refuse to turn to Him, to show we are ready to love Him! Is such indifference natural, laudable? A greater misfortune there could not be. The good of both worlds can be ours for the asking. Asking *this* spring, *this* source. But we turn away, not thinking a relationship not of give-and-take but of love is possible. Yet if we were to love, the gain is to be wholly our own. To hold His mantle, to walk under its cover—this is where wisdom lies.

پناہِ روئے تو جُستن نہ طورِ مستانیست
کہ آمدن بہ پناہت کمال ہشیاریست

it is not the insane who seek
protection with Thee—
Tis the sane who know and
seek peace with Thee.

This then is the situation. Our weakness, our helplessness cries aloud for some one Who can help us, lift us out of our helplessness. Our great good fortune is that in the Person of Our Allah, we already have such a Being, such a Person. He can afford us the Protection we need and seek. And no ordinary protection. He is ready to run towards us, were we to move towards Him in slow steps. He and His Mercy beckon us. The Holy Quran tells us so:

فَفِرُّوٓا إِلَى اللَّهِ. (الذريات) :

flee ye therefore unto Allah (51:51)

وَسَارِعُوٓا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ

And vie with one another in asking
for forgiveness from your Lord. (3:134)

To the Divine Sovereign we have nothing to present but our humility. If we offer our humility. If we abase ourselves, there will be no want of response on the other side. Acceptance of this our meagre and most modest present is already assured. We have only to ask. He is more than ready to give:

زمیں کی طرح جس نے عاجزی و خاکساری کی
خدا کی رحمتوں نے اس کو ڈھانپا آسماں ہو کر

who humbles himself,
like the earth under him—
receives the cover of Mercy,
like the sky over him.

If to our humility and helplessness we add our sobs and sighs, the Grace from the other side will be abundant. Says Rumi:

اے خنک چشمیکہ او گریانِ اُو
وے ہمایوں دِل کہ اُو بریانِ اُو
ہر کجا آبِ رواں سبزہ بود
ہر کجا اشکِ رواں رحمت بود
باش چوں دولابِ نالاں چشم تر
تا ز صحنِ جانت بر روید خضر

The eye will become cool,
that sheds tears for Him;
the heart will become blessed,
that bleeds for Him.
Where water flows
you'll have verdure green,
where tears flow
you'll have Mercy Divine.
become wet and flowing
like the Persian wheel,
that your life-field may yield
a crop of green.